

CERVANTES' WOMEN:  
TOWARD THE MODERN FEMALE CHARACTER

By

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To Bill, Hilary, and Trevor--

With love . . .

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Although the body of criticism dealing with the Novelas ejemplares and other works by Miguel de Cervantes is mammoth, there has been relatively little done focusing specifically on his women characters, and even less still that situates that analysis in a broad historical context. Yet it is precisely that context which helped determine the development of those characters; and once considered in relation to that context, his treatments of women characters can be seen not as misogynist, but rather as either responses of support for, or of proto-feminist resistances against, the dominant system in a volatile and confusing period of humankind's history.

Using the Novelas ejemplares as a pattern, this study, rather than relying on the traditional idealistic/realistic divisions of the novellas and their characters, divides

Cervantes' women into types based on their relation to the men in their lives, just as seventeenth-century women were categorized based on the same determiners. Such divisions facilitate a determination of whether, given the parameters of the age and the work of his predecessors, Cervantes, the "Father of the Modern Novel," was able, at times, to overcome the prejudices of his society to create the mother of "the Modern Female Character."



## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In spite of recent additions to the critical body dealing with Spanish prose of the Golden Age, feminist rereadings of that literature, particularly of that era's male-authored literature, are still far from numerous. Even Cervantes, perhaps the best known and most analyzed of all Spanish authors, has been, relatively speaking, barely touched upon by contemporary feminist critics. The value of rereadings of Cervantes is obvious, particularly in light of the variety of contradictory opinions that are present in critical studies that deal with Cervantes' women characters. However, an analysis of all of Cervantes' women characters would go beyond the limits of one dissertation. Therefore, for this study, the women of the Novelas ejemplares have been chosen as representative examples of Cervantes' women characters, particularly since that collection provides a microcosm of Cervantine character types and genre styles. In order to best locate common threads that might lead to central themes, the major characters have been divided into five basic character types, based, as Golden Age Spanish women were characterized in real life, on their relation to the dominant male figure in their lives.<sup>1</sup> In addition,

several women characters from other Cervantine texts, Marcela from the Quijote, and Isabela and Auristela from the Persiles, have been included to support and clarify the discussions of the character types described in Chapter 4. Further, since some of the novellas are richer than others in their characterizations of women, the characters drawn from the individual novellas have not been treated equally. Since El licenciado vidriera devotes very little space to any description of women, that novella was only mentioned in passing. For the same reason, less discussion was centered on Rinconete and Cortadillo than on the other novellas, while La fuerza de la sangre, with its problematic topics and interpersonal relationships, was analyzed in more detail.

My particular reading practices have been influenced by the works of my foremothers in the critical sphere, including Melveena McKendrick, Ruth El Saffar, Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, and Mariló Vigil. McKendrick's Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age first gave me the inspiration for a division of Cervantes' character types, whereas El Saffar's Novel to Romance was the first work to pique my interest in the novels themselves. Gilbert and Gubar's descriptions of angel-monster polarity in The Madwoman in the Attic brought my attention to the impossible position of women in a patriarchal society. Vigil's work, La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII, was invaluable for historical

background and as an aid to understanding the social positions open to Golden Age women in general. In addition, Mary S. Gossy's recent publication, The Untold Story: Women and Theory in Golden Age Texts, has confirmed, reinforced, and expanded many of my own ideas.

In earlier works, Cervantes was given little credit for any proto-feminist ideas, and was sometimes accused of misogynist tendencies. For example, Sadie Edith Trachman claimed in 1932 that "Cervantes is absolutely conventional in his acceptance of all the commonly recognized thoughts about woman."<sup>2</sup> In 1956, Agustín G. de Amezáa y Mayo declared that

el antifeminismo de Cervantes se distingue muy poco del general vigente en su tiempo, un feminismo peyorativo, que sigue con dócil rutina la tradición clásica, la de subestimar a la mujer como inferior en todo al hombre.<sup>3</sup>

He then added that "la carencia de sentimiento hace sus creaciones femeninas, con las excepciones dichas [Precioso, Constanza, Leonisa], borrosas y desvaídas, con arreglo a un patrón común, sin propia y recia personalidad (243). Then in 1981, Ruth Lamb, in a discussion of women characters in the Quijote, stated that Cervantes created "tipos femeninos de gran variación y modulación;<sup>4</sup>" and in the same year, Helia M. Corral's opinion was that

las mujeres de Cervantes tienen un dejo de modernidad que vale la pena contemplar no sólo por el deleite estético que implica esta actitud, sino por la oportunidad que ofrecen los personajes femeninos de Cervantes al lector contemporáneo, de apreciar algunos aspectos o, mejor dicho, una etapa del desarrollo paulatino que se ha llevado a cabo en la

exposición de los personajes femeninos en la literatura occidental.<sup>5</sup>

This shift in critical analyses away from claims of misogyny and towards interpretations that point to evidence of proto-feminism becomes more understandable when one considers the large number of social changes that have taken place in the last century. Put simply, we do not read as our grandparents and parents read.

Cervantes proved himself to be aware of the importance of reader involvement in the reading process when he had a variety of characters in the Quijote present their individual interpretations and defenses of the novels of chivalry.<sup>6</sup> He seems to have accepted that each reader, within the bounds of the text, is free to "write," or interpret, his or her own text. Fortunately so, for my text has never seemed to be the text of those around me. I have always felt empathy for the "wrong" characters, and heartily disliked or distrusted some of the "right" ones. Patrocinio P. Schweickart, in her essay "Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading," states that "taking control of the reading experience means reading the text as it was not meant to be read, in fact, reading it against itself."<sup>7</sup> Since the characters that I consistently "mis-read" or interpreted against commonly accepted reading practices were overwhelmingly female, it seemed that my mis-reading might become a feminist rereading--a feminist rereading from the perspective of a woman reader.

It is certain that the exemplarity of Cervantes' Novelas ejemplares is not of the classic sententious, moralizing variety. Alban K. Forcione mentions the probability of Cervantes' "awareness that the exemplarity of his tales is not to be sought where expected."<sup>8</sup> It seems likely that the novellas were written in the vein of the younger Lope's "Arte nuevo de hacer comedias," with the goal of teaching while entertaining, particularly since, in the Prologue of the Novelas, Cervantes suggests that there is "algún ejemplo provechoso" that can be derived from each of the novellas separately and from all of the novellas as a unit. He then compares them to a "mesa de trucos" provided for each reader's enjoyment.<sup>9</sup> Since the morals supposedly exemplified in each tale are not clearly stated for the reader, the interpretations vary, depending upon the reader. Perhaps then, for some readers at least, the key to the exemplarity of the novels can be found within the types of characters that Cervantes chose to create and in their ways of dealing with the world around them.

In preparing this study of Cervantes' women, I was guided by: the opinions of critics such as Carlos Fuentes, who stated that "sin duda, este hombre [Cervantes] era consciente del contexto cultural e histórico de la Europa de fines del siglo XVI e inicios del XVII, y particularmente de las realidades de España como fortaleza de la Contrarreforma;"<sup>10</sup> and Anthony J. Cascardi, who wrote that "to view works of art as detached from the historical and

social conditions surrounding their production is to view art as what Marx calls a "simple abstraction . . . the nature of an abstraction is such that it contradicts or denies the historical reality of that which it categorizes or represents;"<sup>11</sup> and my own belief that to isolate a work from its historical context is to diminish the appreciation and understanding of that work. As stated by Ruth El Saffar, when describing not only Cervantes' creation of the Persiles, but also the difficulties he faced in the task of writing in general,

The problems Cervantes was working with were not confined to literature. Essential to the process being described here is the realization that "fiction" reaches far beyond the borders of the written text . . . When Cervantes struggles with the literary problem posed by courtly love, he is also struggling with the dominant consciousness of his day.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in order to better understand Cervantes' characters, it becomes necessary to ask, what was that "dominant consciousness" against which Cervantes found himself forced to struggle?

Cervantes wrote in the prime of Spain's "Golden Age," but the "gold" had already begun to wear thin in almost all but the arts by the time of his birth. He was faced with a nation in turmoil, a nation whose political power had been slowly ebbing since the death of Isabella in 1504. Although it was a nation that treated him badly, he seems never to have wavered in his loyalty to it--a loyalty that remained strong even as his literary creations were quietly

criticizing certain unjust social policies, policies such as those that permitted, and even promoted, the unfair treatment of women.

Depending upon the source of the historical text consulted, Spain's "Golden Age" is considered to have spanned between one and two hundred years, beginning in the 1500's, and ending in the late 1600's. For the purposes of this study, the death of Queen Isabella in 1504 will serve as the beginning point, and the death of Pedro Calderón de la Barca in 1681 will be considered the end. This fecund period of literary and artistic achievements corresponds to a time of great political upheaval in all of Europe--a time of economic, philosophical, and social crises of earth-shattering proportions. In the Golden Age, life was discovered to be not as it seemed. In addition to fortune hunters in ships, inventors and scientists with new advances (such as refinements in optic lenses) were revealing worlds beyond The World. Old traditions and institutions were crumbling, or at least wobbling, under the weight of new discoveries and ideas. World views were challenged, as was the Pope, and God himself was on shaky ground.

Faced with theological questions and doubts provoked in large part by the Protestant Reformation, Spain's rulers, in the tradition of "The Catholic Monarchs" Isabella and Ferdinand, made Spain into the Tower of the Catholic faith. Even the Humanists, formerly tolerated--indeed, encouraged by the enlightened Isabella--fell victim, along with other

unfortunate members of the intelligentsia, to the fanatical mania for Catholic purity. Due to the similarities in calls for reforms and in some scriptural interpretations of Erasmus, the best-known Humanist of all, to the Protestants and to the Spanish "Iluminados" or "Alumbrados," Spanish Humanists were often accused of heretical beliefs and activities, persecuted, forced to flee or be imprisoned, sometimes tortured and burned at the stake as "luteranos." In such cases, personal property was confiscated by the Tribunal and the victims' families, if questioned, might end up condemned to a like fate on the pyre or might suffer only destitution and dishonor (a dreadful situation in a society based on an intricate system of public honor).

Spain's rulers seemingly had few qualms about supporting the excesses of the Inquisition. Such excesses were done, after all, in the spirit of fatherly love, to protect the souls of Spanish subjects from eternal fires. The traditional system of patriarchy was seen to extend in a direct line from, and by design of God through his guardian and soldier, the king (along with his nobles), down to the lowest social stratum. As expressed by José Antonio Maravall:

La creencia, para los más (para la generalidad que establece el nivel de la mentalidad de un grupo), es que la presencia del estamento nobiliario en la parte superior de la escala social se inserta en el orden sobrenatural, de la misma manera que de esa suprema voluntad depende la colocación de los otros órdenes en sus correspondientes niveles: los del último escalón, que socialmente--no en una moral individual--son calificados de infames y de ruines .



. . . están allí arrojados no menos por disposición divina.<sup>13</sup>

Although a divine interpretation of Spain's social divisions was not the only contemporary view of Golden Age society, it was certainly most common to interpret the role of the Spanish monarch as a "father" to his people, helping to maintain each subject in his or her divinely assigned place in society, a society that was decidedly Catholic, in spite of any political conflicts between the Pope and the king. Just how Catholic it was is apparent from the zealous Phillip II's (1555-1598) declaration that he would rather not rule at all than to rule over heretics.<sup>14</sup> Oddly enough, the Pope was sometimes treated as more of a political ally or foe than a spiritual leader--as evidenced in 1527 by Charles V's imprisonment of Pope Clemente and the subsequent sacking of Rome by the Spanish forces.

Nonetheless, however weak or strong the Pope may have been in the political realm, Spanish society in general remained firmly bound by the precepts of a patriarchal religion bolstered by the strength of a patriarchal monarchy. As noted by Gerda Lerner in her book, The Creation of Patriarchy, as civilizations become more complicated,

female subordination within the family becomes institutionalized and codified in law; prostitution becomes established and regulated; with increasing specialization of work, women are gradually excluded from certain occupations and professions. After the invention of writing and the establishment of formal learning, women are excluded from equal access to such education. The cosmogonies, which provide the religious underpinning for the archaic state, subordinate female deities to chief male gods, and

feature myths of origin which legitimate male ascendancy."<sup>15</sup>

It is not surprising that by the sixteenth-century, at a time when patriarchy was well-established as the dominant system, women in Golden Age Spain had only a few very clearly defined, generally passive, roles available to them--limited even further by family expectations. The roles open to women in the family and in society, and the symbolic models she was encouraged to imitate, are of primary importance for understanding Cervantes' women. But what were these roles and models that Cervantes was taught to expect--and possibly even respect--and who were the real women that he saw every day?

There are many variations in the interpretations of woman's social roles among the various contemporary philosophical writings, some making woman into little more than a domesticated animal, either workhorse or pet, others making her into a simple mirror for the male, and still others giving her the role as inferior (but "equal") partner in the marriage. Nevertheless, all roles that I have found described in contemporary manuscripts have one characteristic in common. In general, a woman was only considered acceptable, in fact, was only considered to have an identity at all, when duly attached to a phallic signifier, that is, a male member (or male symbol--i.e., Christ) of the patriarchy. An unattached woman was undefined, a non-entity, a non-existence. No matter how she

spent her time, a woman was either a daughter, a wife, a widow, a nun (attached to Christ, the phallic symbol par excellence), or a prostitute (belonging to all phallic symbols but monitored by one, "el padre de la mancebía"). An unmarried mother was either a "used" daughter or a prostitute, depending on her social standing and society's interpretation of her subsequent sexual conduct.

One Golden Age view of woman was reflected in a still popular topic of debate carried over from the Middle Ages: the question of the existence or non-existence of female honor. Cervantes, who repeatedly dealt with problems of honor in his texts, both directly and indirectly, presented this conflict as settled in woman's favor (as was the usual case in his works) in the Marcela and Grisóstomo episode of Don Quijote I. Both Don Quijote and Marcela eloquently defend her right to remain free and unattached to any male. However, whereas Marcela stresses her status as an individual of free will ("Nací libre . . . tengo riquezas propias y no codicio las ajenas; tengo libre condición y no gusto de sujetarme" DQ I 185), it is Don Quixote who validates her right to claim individual honor ("Ninguna persona, de cualquier estado y condición que sea se atreva a seguir a la hermosa Marcela . . . en lugar de ser seguida y perseguida, sea honrada y estimada de todos los buenos del mundo, pues muestra que en él ella es sola la que con tan honesta intención vive" DQ I 186). Nevertheless, however convincing this and other scenes may have seemed to the

contemporary reader, and no matter how the honor debate with all its facets was decided in fiction, society's interpretation of a man's honor as being connected to the women around him was not generally in dispute.<sup>16</sup> Cervantes, while not specifically disagreeing with this concept, did choose to stress in his works the separate, personal honor of each individual, while including women as viable individuals with their own honor.

Although it was not until the beginning of the eighteenth century, during the reign of the first Bourbon king, Phillip V, that the Germanic "Salic Laws" denying the throne to women were brought into Spain, it is evident that the attitudes leading to that last straw for Spanish women in that process of the strengthening of the Spanish patriarchy had been steadily building for centuries preceding his rule. Reeling from the political and theological challenges of the Reformation, the Catholic hierarchy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries instituted measures to repress any group or individual involved in possible subversions or heresies. As stated by Maravall, "cuando una sociedad determinada se desmorona, se produce un endurecimiento de los resortes de conservación" (138). Any questioning of the ruling hierarchy might have been interpreted as subversive. Pleas for reforms and more individual freedoms were grounds for suspicion of heresy. Being different was dangerous. Even total conformity was not safe, if one were surrounded by envious neighbors. Women,

marked by society as irremediably different, were particularly affected by the new repressions, since any move on their part to expand, alter, or escape from the limited roles that were open to them could be considered subversive. In everyday life, midwives and herbalists were burned as witches in increasing numbers throughout Europe (although in Spain not in such large numbers as in other countries such as Germany and France) in what Julio Caro Baroja called "the great crisis in witchcraft [of the Baroque period]."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, as noted by Merry Weisner, women suffered serious blows to their symbolic role models as well, since "the number of new female Saints recognized during the Counter Reformation was far fewer than the number of new male saints, for two important avenues to sanctity, missionary and pastoral work, were closed to women."<sup>18</sup> And the Humanists, who had given at least some relief by their advocacy of some education for women, and who had been so respected by Isabella and her daughter, Catherine of Aragon, soon fell under suspicion.

Although the fact that fiction is never a historically accurate image of an author's everyday reality is becoming increasingly clear now, especially since the very idea of historical accuracy itself has come under fire, the combined aspects of any author's society and life experiences are necessarily reflected, with varying degrees of interpretive distortion, in the creative works that he or she produces. Cervantes could not help but be affected by the

circumstances and environment of his time. In addition to the hardships of his captivity and his marginal social status, his exposure to the learned ideals of his society, created to define and confine woman, combined with his experiences with the real women that he saw everyday, certainly affected his characterizations of women. Therefore, a basic understanding of the roles open to the women of Cervantes' Spain and how Spain regarded those women is necessary for any study of Cervantes' female characters. A more in-depth exploration of those two topics will be presented in the following two chapters of this study.

Cervantes' interest in Seville is evident from his inclusion of that city within the text of several of the novellas (such as Rinconete and Cortadillo, La española inglesa, and El celoso extremeño). Further, he spent an appreciable amount of time in that city (living for a time there with his family as a child, then living there again as an adult working as a government official supplying the ships (1587-1594), and finally serving a seven-month sentence in the jail of Seville for mismanagement of government funds<sup>19</sup>). In addition, since Seville's archives, including the Archivo General de Indias, which has Cervantes' failed petition for a post in the New World, and the Archivo Municipal de Sevilla, provide a wealth of information on daily life of Golden Age Spain, I found that city to be especially useful for purposes of filling in a basic sketch of contemporary sixteenth and seventeenth

century life, to aid in the better understanding of Cervantes' women characters.

For example, real-life models for Cervantes' prostitutes were far from lacking. Extrapolating from Seville's laws regulating brothels--e.g., curtailing visits by an over-zealous priest who succeeded in converting former profit-makers to a new way of life, mandatory mass for the prostitute residents of the "casa pública", required clothing to distinguish "mujeres honradas" from "las perdidas", necessary medical examinations, medicinal herbs to be kept on hand, and treatment of infected women in an attempt to stem the tide of syphillis outbreaks, vetoes regarding feeble and elderly prostitutes and prostitutes who entered into or were sold into the business by husbands or other relatives to pay debts, prohibitions regarding unregulated procuring and pimping, including seduction of young children for such purposes, etc., it is clear that prostitution was not only well-established, but was accepted as a profitable enterprise which involved the town fathers, the Church, and individual members of the clergy as well.<sup>20</sup> Seville, of course was not alone in efforts to monitor prostitution. The "consejos" dealing with government in Madrid's Archivo Histórico Nacional record case after case dealing with prostitution and the problems of health that it posed.<sup>21</sup> One is reminded that prostitution has its roots deep in society's history by sixteenth-century petitions decrying modern reforms and calling for the reinstatement of

proper brothel traditions of past centuries.

In addition to problems with syphilis, with the sixteenth-century version of the inevitable traveling "snake-oil salesman," plague was a recurrent terror throughout the sixteenth century. Travellers were carefully checked at town gates to screen out possible incoming carriers, and the use of plague victims' clothing and bedding was not only discouraged, but also was forbidden by town law.<sup>22</sup> In spite of fear of the plague, fear of knowing too much by way of medical experimentation remained high, with science losing out in favor of religious prejudices. Autopsies for medical research were specifically forbidden (Escribanías 11). Yet did problems in the realm of public health affect women any differently than they affected men? In some cases, they undoubtedly did. Prostitutes, for example, suffering from the ravaging effects of syphilis, would have found themselves less able, or entirely incapable of continuing with their "profession." Women who survived the plague itself often found themselves with no family members left and therefore, with no means to support themselves. Fear of medical experimentation retarded progress not only in the finding of cures for diseases, but in alleviating complications associated with pregnancy and childbirth.

Women were not exempt from crime or from activities deemed criminal by their society. In addition to their illegal participation in lesbianism or sexual "crimes," they



were imprisoned for some of the same reasons that women and men are imprisoned today, including: murder, prostitution, fraud, pickpocketing and other forms of robbery.<sup>23</sup> As recorded in the Efemérides, criminal activity was often punishable by the death penalty--hanging or being burned at the stake in the Plaza Mayor--sentences which were administered by the secular authorities of the town even when convictions were handed down by the representatives of the Church. The definition of "crime" included religious and sexual "crimes," as well as the typical robberies and murders, etc. Those convicted of sexual "crimes against nature" were punished by burning at the stake, as were convicted Lutherans and secret Jews. Fortune-telling might also be judged a capital crime. The careful listings of "autos de fe" with the numbers of penitents censured and reconciled and the numbers of those burned at the stake--classified by sex, by crime, and sometimes by occupation (particularly if the victim was a recalcitrant priest or an important figure in the town) demonstrate clearly that the Inquisition, acting in conjunction with the secular authorities, was a powerful force feared by both sexes. Judging from contemporary documents, it seems evident that women formed a visible sector of daily criminal life beyond their public punishments for violation of prostitution laws or Church mandates. Sensational crimes involving women--such as the beata who went berserk and stabbed a priest in 1588, or the Moorish bath operator who murdered her husband and

left his corpse to be found floating in their tubs by neighborhood women who were stealing hot water through the window for their wash--apparently shocked sixteenth-century Seville just as similar crimes shock modern society today (Efemérides 20).

Poor women worked as servants and laundresses. Influential religious women ran convents and schools. Well-to-do women did charitable works and provided for dowries for orphan girls and alms for the poor in their wills. Women of all types came into Seville from other parts of Spain in order to sail on the next fleet to the New World. Passenger lists indicate that not all these women were accompanied by husbands or male relatives. Some were traveling as servants, some were going to reunite with relatives already in the New World, and some appear to have been traveling alone.<sup>24</sup> Once the fleet sailed, the work force of the town seems likely to have been composed largely of women.<sup>25</sup> However, the lawmakers were obviously still men--men who did not always take into consideration the fact of life that women often supported their men, whether through prostitution or fruit-selling by the town wall. Women anxious for political power were perhaps luckier in the unsettled new colonies, just as their foremothers had been in the early days of the Reconquest.<sup>26</sup>

In spite of the black or white bi-polar constructs of theologians and moralists, and their opinions regarding female enclosure, the evidence is clear that in Cervantes'

Spain, while there may have been "good" women and "bad" women, just as there were rich women and poor women, women who wielded a great deal of power and women who lived in conditions of extreme subjugation, women who went out and women who stayed home, most importantly, the majority of women possessed a mixture of traits, somewhere in between. And Cervantes' women, created in an atmosphere of extreme repression, necessarily reflect the influence of the age, the life experiences of the author and the real women of his time.

That Cervantes' literary reactions to his age can now be seen as pro-woman is a tribute to the spirit of a courageous thinker who overcame, to an admirable degree, the politics and ideological constraints of an age of extreme repression and denigration of the female in order to produce a body of works acceptable to the Inquisition censors but, nevertheless, works that might later be interpreted as a literature of subversion replete with hidden messages and symbols. Cervantes himself provides direct hints of the importance of veiled references in his works when describing Don Quijote's naming of Dulcinea: "y buscándole nombre . . . vino a llamarla 'Dulcinea del Toboso,' . . . nombre a su parecer, músico y peregrino y significativo, como todos los demás que a él y a sus cosas había puesto" (DQ I 91).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mariló Vigil, La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986). See her type-divisions of women, "la doncella," "la casada," "la viuda," and "la monja," based on marital status or attachment to church.

<sup>2</sup> Sadie Edith Trachman, Cervantes' Women of Literary Tradition (Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Lancaster, 1932) 5.

<sup>3</sup> Agustín G. de Amezúa y Mayo, Cervantes: Creador de la novela corta española, 2 vols. (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1956) 238.

<sup>4</sup> Ruth S. Lamb, "Las mujeres en El Quijote: Contraste entre la mujer renacentista y la mujer barroca," Cervantes: su obra y su mundo, ed. Manuel Criado del Val (Madrid: EDI 6, 1981) 767.

<sup>5</sup> Helia M. Corral, "La mujer en las Novelas ejemplares de Cervantes Saavedra," Cervantes: su obra y su mundo (Madrid: EDI 6) 397.

<sup>6</sup> Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quijote de la Mancha, ed. John Jay Allen, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983) vol. 1, 375-382. Hereinafter cited within text as DQ I or DQ II.

<sup>7</sup> Patrocínio P. Schweickart, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading," Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts, eds. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocínio P. Schweickart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986) 50.

<sup>8</sup> Alban K. Forcione, Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: A Study of Four Exemplary Novels (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982) 4.

<sup>9</sup> Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Novelas ejemplares, ed. Harry Sieber, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Madrid: Cátedra, 1981) vol. 1, 52. Hereinafter cited within text as: NE I or NE II.

10 Carlos Fuentes, Cervantes o la crítica de la lectura (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1976) 14).

11 Anthony J. Cascardi, "Reason and Romance: An Essay on Cervantes's Persiles," Modern Language Notes 106.2 (1991): 280.

12 Ruth S. El Saffar, Beyond Fiction (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1984) 13-14.

13 José Antonio Maravall, Poder, honor y élites en el siglo XVII, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1984) 47.

14 Francisco Ugarte, Panorama de la civilización española (Indianapolis: Odyssey Press, 1963) 148.

15 Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986) 54.

16 See Vigil (145) on "honor."

17 Julio Caro Baroja, The World of the Witches, trans. O. N. V. Glendinning (1961; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975) 201.

18 Merry E. Weisner, "Nuns, Wives, and Mothers: Women and the Reformation in Germany" Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Private and Public Worlds, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989) 14.

19 John J. Allen, introduction, Don Quijote de la Mancha I, by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983) 9-17.

20 Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Escribanías de Cabildo, Sec. 4, Siglo XVII Tomo 24, No. 26.

21 Archivo Histórico Nacional. Consejos, Sala de Alcalde y Corte, Libros de Gobierno. For examples, see: Año 1596, folleto 122 ("las mujeres enamoradas y públicas de

Lavapies"); 1604, folleto 176 ("las contagiadas"); 1609, folleto 409 ("las de las entradas de los Bodegones).

22 Eight thousand reportedly died within an eight month span in 1567. Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Sección Especial 11. Conde de Aguila. Efemérides. Tomo 20. Número 1.

23 Mary Elizabeth Perry, Crime and Society in Early Modern Seville (Hanover: Univ. Press of New England, 1980). See especially, 12-53 and 212-234.

24 For a detailed summary and categorization of Book 1 of the "Archivo General de Indias, Contratación, 5.538," see María del Carmen Galbis Diez. Catálogo de Pasajeros a Indias: Siglos XVI, XVII, XVIII vol. VI (1578-1585). Sevilla: Ministerio de Cultura, Dirección General de Bellas Artes y Archivos, 1986.

25 Perry, Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990) 14-32.

26 Heath Dillard, Daughters of the Reconquest (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984). This book treats extensively the relative influence and freedom enjoyed by women during the political and social upheavals of the Reconquest in Spain.

## CHAPTER 2 THE IDEAL WOMAN

Cervantes was faced daily with a wide variety of images of woman stemming from many sources, classical as well as contemporary, and pagan as well as Catholic. Since those images contributed to the formation of his women characters, in order to better understand those characters, this chapter will examine some of the most prominent female models, stereotypes, and ideals from literature, classical texts, and the teachings of Catholic theologians--models that Cervantes had to contemplate, rework, utilize, and refute when creating his works.

Several modern critics, including Alban K. Forcione and Marcel Bataillon, have traced a significant Humanist influence throughout the body of Cervantes' works. Cervantes is believed to have studied for a time, in his early twenties, in Madrid, with the Spanish Humanist master, Juan López de Hoyos. Since the ideas of traditional Spanish Scholastics were often in direct opposition to the ideas of Humanist philosophers, even though members of both groups were Catholic, the Humanist influence on Cervantes' characterizations of women will be discussed in a separate section of this chapter.

### Literary Models

References to a variety of works by other authors in Cervantes' texts make it clear that he read widely, not only in Spanish, but also in Italian, and that he was a highly critical reader. Furthermore, although it is not possible for the modern scholar to have knowledge of all of the literary works which may have influenced his writing, nor which of those exerted the greatest influence in his creation of female characters, it is possible to examine a representative sample of some of the outstanding (or notorious) fictional women of his day. By examining the evidence of works mentioned by contemporary critics and moralists, in addition to the books named by Cervantes himself in his description of Don Quijote's library, it is possible to arrive at some reasonable conclusions about the types of books and some specific titles that were in vogue during the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries and which Cervantes might reasonably have been expected to have read.

One voice among the many, Malón de Chaide complained in his La conversión de la Magdalena (1588) about the moral dangers of youth reading "libros lascivos y profanos." He cited specifically, the pastoral Diana by Montemayor and the chivalric Amadís de Gaula by Montalvo. His greatest fear was for "la doncellita que apenas sabe andar, y ya trae una Diana en la faldriquera," because he believed that exposure to works of that type would only infuse her with wanton



ideas that would lead to her moral perdition and the dishonoring of her father's household.<sup>1</sup> Malón de Chaide's warnings echoed the concerns of other moralists, including Fray Luis de León, Juan Luis Vives, and Francisco de Osuna, who were concerned with the effects of the growing interest in the fabulous and provocative tales of the fifteenth and sixteenth-centuries.<sup>2</sup> These works had reached such a level of popularity that many feared for the souls of young parishioners who might try to emulate their favorite heroines--figures who were, by Catholic standards, unacceptable as role models, and were, in fact, incarnations of many of the very traits against which the theologians were preaching. In sexual matters these fictional women were liberal. In the eyes of contemporary moralists, it was even worse that it was not the "lost" women, but those portrayed by the authors as "good"--the beautiful, the loyal, the high-born ladies--who burned with passion. Erotic desires may have been considered inappropriate by the Church hierarchy, but they were almost a requirement for heroines in popular literature. They not only desired, they flirted, they seduced, and they enjoyed without remorse or retribution.

At the center of the controversy was the popular concept of courtly love, a decidedly unchristian attachment to (or deification of) a member of the opposite sex which had its roots in the songs of the troubadors. As noted by O. H. Green, "in spite of its incompatibility with Christian

doctrine, courtly love was regarded by its proponents as an ally, even a producer, of virtue."<sup>3</sup> The virtue of courtly love was that, in its ideal form, the anguished lover did not succumb to the physical satisfaction of desire with the woman chosen as his earthly representative of perfection. However, since the object of his unfulfilled desire was a flesh and blood woman, and not an abstract symbol of a Christian desire to become one with Christ, his worshipping of her was contrary to Christian teachings.

Although the primary vehicle for courtly love was the romance of chivalry, Cervantes' target in his famous parody: "porque todo él [libro] es una invectiva contra los libros de caballerías . . ." (DQ I 72), traces of courtly love ideals are discernible in many areas including the Celestina. Long before the lovesick Don Quijote made readers laugh at his fascination with the hefty Aldonza Lorenzo, that generic platypus, more accurately titled La (tragi)comedia de Calisto y Melibea, showed evidence of the popularity of courtly love. The plot of this novel-drama follows two parallel threads of action--the upper-class deification of Melibea by Calisto ("Melibeo so[y]") woven together with the lower-class escapades of Celestina, her "girls" and the two servants, Pármeno and Sempronio.<sup>4</sup> As will be discussed below, this work is of particular importance to this study, due to the mixture of courtly lovers and picaresque-type characters and to Cervantes' admiration for it. It is interesting to note here that in

the tragic love of Calisto and Melibea, virtue did not conquer desire, and Melibea committed suicide, after having lost her virginity in a liason with Calisto that had been arranged by Celestina.

As in Melibea's case, courtly love, in spite of its lofty ideals and its presentation of men and women desiring merely for the sake of desiring, frequently culminated in other than pure spiritual love, chaste adoration and unconsummated desire. Moreover, with or without consummation, emotions of that magnitude were not considered acceptably Christian outside the religious mystic experience. Succinctly, in the words of Green (I 76), "Courtly love was divorced from Christian morality." Nevertheless, its influence, perpetuated through the popular chivalric romances, was so widespread that even Saint Teresa admitted to having partaken of its vicarious pleasures as a young girl (Green I 13).

The literary models of the courtly love tales were not the only popular models for the Golden Age reader. Mirroring the real-life fears, beliefs, and controversies surrounding Golden Age literature and censorship, and perhaps most interesting for this study is Chapter VI of the Quijote, Book I, wherein the Curate and the Barber put the volumes in Don Quijote's library on trial, consigning the majority to be burned in the courtyard below in a scene reminiscent of the real historical accounts of the Inquisition's "autos de fe." In light of the frequency of such executions throughout

the sixteenth century in major centers in Spain, including Seville, a town where Cervantes lived many years, the similarities between the human and the literary trials are surely more than mere coincidence.<sup>5</sup>

A tally of the books mentioned specifically by title in Chapter VI of the first part of the Quijote shows that of 29 books, 16 were saved by the Curate from the flames. To pare the list even more, it is almost certain that one of the saved, Los diez libros de Fortuna de amor by Antonio de Lofraso, is actually being mocked, since it was directly attacked in Cervantes' Viaje del Parnaso.<sup>6</sup> Of the nameless mountain of chivalric romances, only Amadís, Tirante el Blanco (Tirant lo Blanch, in its original Catalán), and Palmerín de Inglaterra are definitively saved. The Espejo de Caballerías is consigned to "perpetual exile" in a dry well and Don Belianís is saved only on condition that the Barber allow no one else to read it. The majority of books in Don Quijote's library seem to fall into one of two main categories, that is, either chivalric or pastoral romances, in addition to only a few volumes of poetry that are specifically named. In keeping with the parodic purpose of the writing of the Quijote, the pastorals are generally more favorably regarded by the Curate as being "libros de entendimiento" (DQ I 135). Particularly noteworthy from that group is the Galatea, Cervantes' own contribution to the genre and the work for which he seems to feel the most fondness and the most guilt for having left without the

promised sequel. The Curate describes it as the book that "propone algo, y no concluye nada," (DQ I 125) and Cervantes, just before his death, mentions it again in the Dedication of the Persiles (16), promising "si . . . me diese el cielo vida, las ver, y con ellas fin de La Galatea."

Finally, of all the defendants, from only two are women characters mentioned, from one work to be condemned and from another to be saved. Queen Pintiquiniestra, in Amads de Grecia by Feliciano de Silva, is thrown to the pyre with such enthusiasm that the Curate swears "que a trueco de quemar a la reina Pintiquiniestra, y al pastor Darinel, y a sus glogas, y a las endiabladas y revueltas razones de su autor, quemar con ellos al padre que me engendr, si anduviera en figura de caballero andante" (DQ I 130). However, Placerdemivida, the Emperatriz, and the Viuda Reposada from Tirante el Blanco are exalted and the volume saved from the pyre by the Curate for its verisimilitude (knights ate, slept, died in their beds, and made wills), and because he had found in it "un tesoro de contento y una mina de pasatiempos" (DQ I 122-123). It is ironic that Cervantes should have had a member of the clergy saving and even praising this particular book, which has been called by Green (1: 13) "perhaps the most sensual in Spanish literature," but the supreme irony is that the person who ends the whole affair by insisting that everything be tossed into the flames is Don Quijote's young niece, the one least likely to know anything of the books' merits or defects.

Tirant lo Blanch by the Valencian, Joan Martorell, has been defended by the author and critic Mario Vargas Llosa (and later by Edward T. Aylward, among others) as a precursor of the modern novel.<sup>7</sup> Whereas the Quijote was aimed at the excesses and inverisimilitudes of the novels of chivalry, Tirant was more critical of the actual practices of the courtly tradition that were common among the upper classes, in spite of being outdated and exaggerated to the point of ridiculous extremes. The principal proponents of the practical "modern" ideas in Tirant are women. As stated by Aylward, "the figure of the sprightly damsel Plaerdemavida [Placerdemivida in Spanish] is arguably the most successfully drawn character in the entire novel and the one which has tickled the fancy of more readers and critics than any other"(206). She is described as a benevolent and sensible go-between with matter-of-fact views on human sexuality that are similar to Celestina's, but she is without Celestina's selfish motives. As is the case with Rojas' masterful character, Placerdemivida also uses religion to support her arguments in favor of the Princess Carmesina's acceptance of Tirant's advances. Whereas Celestina represents herself as an agent of God bent on easing Melibea's pain by way of Calisto, Placerdemivida maintains that to refuse sexual favors to such a noble warrior as Tirant is a sin that will surely be punished.<sup>8</sup> She encourages and even goads both Tirant and Carmesina on their route to physical gratification, mocking them at every

reluctant turn. The farcical humor of the erotic scenes between the randy Tirant and his idealistic lady, set up in large part by the wily Placerdemivida, rivals the humor of some of Don Quijote's most hilarious escapades. And far from being punished for her forward ideas and sensuality, Placerdemivida ends up happily married, confirming Martorell's thesis, as interpreted by Aylward (116), that true love is found only in the married state, a message seemingly missed altogether by the addled Don Quijote, but certainly not overlooked by Cervantes, who presented for his readers the image of what Don Quijote might have been in the figure of the comfortable country squire, Don Diego de Miranda, "El Caballero del Verde Gabán" (DQ II 156-172).

The Emperatriz de Grecia is another lusty character admired by the priest, and again, rather ironically so, considering the Catholic hierarchy's general disapproval of adultery, and particularly in the case of older, married, upper class women with younger men. Nor is there any divine retribution in this case to serve as a moral lesson at the end of the novel. If anything, the Empress and her lover, Hipólito, are rewarded for their sins. She is released from an sexually unfulfilling marriage by the convenient death of her husband. Her boyish lover not only marries her, but following her death after three years of wedded bliss, he inherits the whole kingdom, remarries a young princess, and lives "happily ever after" with his new love and many heirs.

It is interesting to note that the three female

characters from Tirant that were pointed out in this chapter of the Quijote present to the reader different degrees of complexity of characterization (as noted by Aylward 204-206). While the psychological development of Placerdemivida is the most complete in the entire novel, and the Emperatriz is adequate and necessary as a believable minor character in a subplot, the last of the three women cited by the priest, the Viuda Reposada, is the most stereotypical. She serves mainly as a vehicle for comic situations and as a foil for Placerdemivida's plans rather than as a fully developed character.

Two principal female characters from Martorell's novel are passed over in the priest's eulogy: the heiress, Estefanía; and the Greek princess, Carmesina. Estefanía is perhaps the most sensible and practical of all the women in Tirant. Having anticipated the seduction attempt of Diafebus, she grants him permission to enjoy her charms from the waist up, having previously hidden in her bodice a legal document, signed in her own blood, outlining the terms of her willingness to comply fully with his desires once they have completed a vow to marry, "un casamiento de palabra." At that time, although increasingly frowned upon by Church authorities, if such an agreement was consummated, it was legally and morally binding as a valid marriage.<sup>9</sup> It is impossible not to compare this clever, wealthy, noble Estefanía as created by Martorell with the poor, but equally clever, lower-class Estefanía of Cervantes' El casamiento



engañoso. Each had as her primary aim the security of marriage. However, and perhaps this says more about his understanding of women's problems than any other of Cervantes' female creations, in the case of the lower-class Estefanía, that bid for security was not only devoid of true love or even passion, but was also inextricably bound by the more pressing and fundamental drive to ensure economic survival in a world which provided few options to dowerless women who had passed marriageable age and who entertained little hope for the future.

Carmesina, Tirant's lady, is ignored by the Curate. Nonetheless, she is a nearly ideal courtly lady who adheres to outdated courtly traditions long after Tirant has taken Placerdemivida's advice to abandon his foolish and fruitless games. She is, fittingly, reincarnated for the Cervantine reader by Don Quijote who reveals her as a figure similar to--though not as wonderful as--the unparalleled Dulcinea del Toboso. In spite of Don Quijote's admiration for this character, in her own story Placerdemivida defines Carmesina's hesitance at participating in a sexual encounter with Tirant as foolish, immature, and even sinful (Tirant 395). This overt criticism of one of the main characters stands in stark contrast to Oriana, Carmesina's counterpart in Amadís de Gaula who is presented in a more positive light.

In Amadís de Gaula, the actions of the beautiful Oriana, Amadís' lady, provide an excellent illustration of

the paradoxical nature of the chivalric genre. Although the romances of chivalry, in general, and Amadís de Gaula, in particular, served as a vehicle for the sensuous courtly love ideals which were incarnated in the figures of the perfect knight and his flawless lady and although, since they did not put marriage followed by procreation at the forefront of any sexual relationship, they were fundamentally non-Christian in motivation, these works usually maintained an remarkable synthesis of contradicting philosophies, freely mixing Christianity with pagan ideals, magic, and witchcraft. In Amadís, when Oriana finds herself nearly alone in the forest with her knight, she instigates the consummation of their love herself, without benefit of a public marriage, when she advises provocatively, "Señor, quien buen tiempo tiene y lo pierde, tarde lo recobra."<sup>10</sup> Typically, courtly love, like its Neoplatonic counterpart in the pastoral romances, avoided marital unions and procreation. However, Amadís and Oriana did marry in Book IV, (after Oriana had borne Amadís' son). The changing tone of the love of the two protagonists is marked by Oriana's reply to Amadís when he asks how he can repay her for allowing their love to be publicly revealed:

Señor, . . . ya no es tiempo de que me hagáis tanta cortesía, que yo soy la que debe serviros y seguir vuestra voluntad con la obediencia que la mujer debe al marido, y en adelante quiero conocer vuestra voluntad con la obediencia que la mujer debe al marido, y en adelante quiero conocer vuestro amor en que me tratéis como la razón lo consiente y no de otra manera (Amadís 350).

Thus, their marriage signals the end of her position as courtly love goddess and the beginning of her role as wife.

When, at Amadís' request, Oriana gains entrance into the enchanted "cámara defendida," the unrelenting desiring and suffering typical of courtly love are effectively removed. However, although she commends herself to God ("Oriana entró...se santiguó y encomendó a Dios."), it is made very clear that she is granted entrance due to the power of her physical beauty: "Así, con mucha porfía y gran corazón, y más que nada con su extremada belleza, llegó muy cansada a la puerta de la cámara..." (Amadís 357). Upon her entrance, not only is Amadís reassured of the purity of Oriana's love, but in a rare moment in Spanish literature, Oriana is guaranteed a life free from worrying about her husband's possible future infidelities: "Oriana entró en la cámara y se sintió alegre como si fuese señora del mundo. En adelante podría hacer compañía a Amadís sin temor de que viniese ninguna mujer, por hermosa que fuese" (Amadís 358).

In spite of some chivalric romances' concessions to the traditional marriage ending, it is easy to see how the Catholic moralists would have felt threatened by the types of romantic relationships portrayed in such works. In addition to the romances of chivalry, another threat to the dominant belief system was presented by the Neoplatonists, whose literary endeavors produced, among other things, the pastoral romances. As cited above, Cervantes demonstrates a fondness for this genre and for his own Galatea in

particular. Both the well-known Diana by Jorge de Montemayor and the Diana enamorada by Gil Polo are rescued by the Curate in the Quijote, although the first is saved only in a censored version, the second, uncut, is praised "como si fuera del mismo Apolo" (DQ I 124). The section removed from Montemayor's book deals with the wise Felicia and her enchanted water which provided the author with a deus ex machina solution to love's (and his plot's) problems. It is only to be expected that this total disregard for believable solutions to literary problems would have so irritated Cervantes, who demonstrated a great interest in maintaining verisimilitude in his works. It is also not surprising that Gil Polo's sequel should have been so highly praised since it is known for its non-fantastic solutions.

Like the "novelas de caballería," the pastoral novels are an upper-class literature, that is, a genre whose characters may have appeared in the disguise of shepherds but whose actions and demeanor immediately identified them as "noble," whether in spirit or in fact. However, unlike the chivalric novels, action in the pastorals is limited, and violence, when it does occur, is almost shocking. Forerunners of the psychological novels of later centuries, they are filled with analysis and reflection. The setting and scenery are utopian. Love, ever present in the chivalric novels, appears in the pastorals, as Avalle-Arce writes, "depurado en el crisol petrarquista, [que] empalma con el refinado amor platónico, ese puro 'deseo de hermosura' que

acucia al hombre renacentista . . . "11 The women, objects of male desire and symbols of perfect beauty, are not, as individual characters, particularly memorable. However, their general characteristics are more interesting. They are an independent lot; and they are intelligent, beautiful, headstrong, aloof, and frequently disdainful of male attentions. They are, in fact, much like the mythological figures after whom they are patterned and, as such, permit the author to give them a liberty and forcefulness natural to these goddesses that was not typical of ordinary Golden Age characters--not even to the "wanton" characters from the chivalric genre.

Felismena, the disguised Castilian noblewoman in Montemayor's Diana, is an example of the goddess-like women of the pastorals. Wandering alone in the forest, she comes to the aid of three nymphs who are being abducted by three savages ("tres salvages, de estraña grandeza y fealdad . . . Eran de tan fea catadura que ponían espanto."12 Before her arrival, two shepherds and the shepherdess Selvagia are trying to defend the nymphs. In keeping with the general characteristics of women in this genre, it is explicitly stated that Selvagia is playing an equal role in this defense team:

Los dos pastores y la pastora Selvagia . . . viendo la crueldad con que a las hermosas nimphas tratavan y no pudiendo sufrillo, determinaron de morir o defendellas. Y sacando todos tres sus hondas . . . comiençan a tirar a los salvages con tanta maña y esfuerço, como si en ello les fuera la vida (Diana 89).

Nevertheless, in spite of Selvagia's and the two male shepherds' heroic efforts, the savages are gaining ground until the entrance of the amazon-like Felismena:

de entre la espessura del bosque, . . . salió una pastora de tan grande hermosura y disposición que los que la vieron quedaron admirados. Su arco tenía colgado del brazo ysquierdo, y una aljava de saetas al ombro, en las manos un bastón de sylvestre enzina, en el cabo del qual avía una muy larga punta de azero (Diana 89-90).

Without showing fear, remorse, or hesitation, she kills two of the savages with her bow and arrows. Then, in hand-to-hand combat, she delivers such a blow to the head of the third that his brains spill out of the wound. This portrayal is diametrical to the non-fiction ideals set up for real-life women of the time who were taught by church leaders such as Fray Luis de León that they were, by nature, weaker and had fewer needs, resulting in the publication, as late as the twentieth century, of instructional manuals for women that urged them to remain true to those ideals.<sup>13</sup> It is no wonder that in spite of the improved sexual morality of the pastoral novels, many Catholic theologians were not pleased with the popularity of these works among their young female parishioners.

However, no matter how licentious, bold, independent, or immoral any of the women may have been in the upper-class pastoral and chivalric novels, in the lower-class literature of the picaresque genre, Catholic morality was perverted almost beyond recognition--even to the point of using double entendres with primary religious and secondary underworld

meanings. Many of the characters in these novels were prostitutes, often with ties to the black arts.

Of all the stars of the picaresque genre, none shines more brightly than *Celestina*, who is often considered the forerunner of later pícaras and, as stated above, was mentioned by Cervantes in his works. Although P. W. Bomli in his La femme dans l'Espagne du siècle d'or did not believe that *Celestina* herself was a forerunner of the pícaras, giving that distinction to her "girls," Areusa and Elicia, his description of her could not be better said:

Qui, en prononçant le mot 'alcahueta' ne pense tout d'abord à *Celestina* . . . Car cette vieille, malfaisante et dépravée, est peinte avec une telle vivacité, une si grande variété de nuances qu'on ne saurait lui dénier le mérite d'être l'incarnation même du type de l'entremetteuse."<sup>14</sup>

Although any reader of Hispanic literature will be familiar with this master character, it is useful for the purposes of this study to mention her most salient traits. She was characterized by her author as a "mala y astuta mujer" (*Celestina* 1: 28). She was well versed in the black arts and exuded an openness about human sexuality (homosexual as well as heterosexual) that places her closer to the Medieval mentality than to the Baroque.<sup>15</sup> Heiress of the Archpriest of Hita's *Trotaconventos* and grandmother of the later "pícaras" such as the "Pícarra Justina" and the "Lozana Andaluza," it is certain that her charms were well known to Cervantes.<sup>16</sup> Not only is Melibea, *Celestina*'s victim and principal character of *Rojas'* parallel plot of courtly love,

mentioned in the Quijote, Cervantes goes to the trouble of working Celestina's name into the anagram at the beginning of his Viaje del Parnaso. However, in spite of his obvious admiration for Rojas' work, it might be said, using Harold Bloom's term, that Cervantes generally chose to "overcome" that "poet father" in a way other than direct imitation of Celestina.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, traces of her and other characters from that work do remain in some of the works dealt with later in this study.

#### Classical Views of Woman

Many of the views about the nature of woman that were common in Cervantes' time derived from classical roots, and the influence of classical authors remained strong throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries. Many of the so-called scientific texts passed down to the Golden Age audience had been based originally on conjecture rather than experimentation or observation. In addition, the texts were often taught out of context and were further distorted by translators. This multi-level distortion in the texts which at that time comprised the basis for most scientific knowledge led to a vision of the universe, and specifically of woman, rife with contradictions, misinformation, and ambiguities.

In recent years Michel Foucault has theorized that Cervantes was born into a world whose theories of knowledge



were based on resemblances of all things, one to another, and he left a world at the peak of a major epistemological change, a world where difference and individual identity replaced resemblance as the basis of knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Viewed in that respect, it seems only logical that in his works Cervantes should have revealed conflicting views regarding not only the nature of the literary creation, but of the very nature of human existence itself. Foucault, in fact, credits Cervantes' Don Quijote with being the seminal character of the new era (The Order of Things 46). No longer is a character who defines existence by resemblances--windmills to giants, prostitutes to princesses--considered normal. Rather he is quite mad, insanely out of touch with the rest of a changing world. Unlike the character, Don Quijote, born middle-aged into the new world, Cervantes was born into a world still caught up in the old system, where knowledge was based on resemblances, on multiple variations and exegetical shadings of the Classical Greek and early Christian models.

In spite of the antithetical natures of many of the major tenets of the Christian religion and the classical pagan philosophies, Christian scholars seemed not only unable, but unwilling to break their intellectual ties to familiar classical texts. Exegeses of Biblical texts were altered and molded to fit already distorted classical writings. Existing information was not displaced or destroyed, it was reviewed and rearranged. So ingrained was

the practice of utilizing existing information, and the idea that the written Word was Law and akin to an organic being, that endless interpretation of existing texts was the primary method of seeking knowledge. Any method of learning which was not based on utilizing the earlier models might, in fact, be interpreted as heresy. Vern Bullough believes that

it was not only Christianity or the unsupported prejudices of the medieval clergy which led to medieval (and modern) misogyny but also the medical and scientific assumptions of the ancient world that were incorporated into medieval thinking with but little challenge. <sup>19</sup>

Pagan authorities had been cited so frequently by Church fathers that their works had become incorporated into the Christian textual body. The trial of the Italian mathematician Galileo exemplifies this attitude on the part of the Church. Although he was officially tried and sentenced in 1633 for not adhering to Christian literalist interpretations regarding the movement and position of the sun and planets, the fact that he dared to question Aristotelian and Ptolemaic Laws, which were interpreted as agreeing with literalist interpretations, certainly did not help his defense.

The practice of constant reworking of older texts, some of which might well be ambiguous or contradictory, explains the co-existence in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries of the paradoxical and contradictory definitions of woman which so confound modern women. Each interpreter (and

translator) read texts, or fragments of texts, out of historical context and through the filter of his own (real) world experiences. Thus, the major models of woman in the sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries were still based, with multiple variations and interpretative shadings, on the classical Greek and early Christian models. Texts became so over-written by centuries of successive reader-writers that by the sixteenth-century, physicians "quoting" Galen to "refute" Aristotle, were neither in line with Galen's ideas, nor against Aristotle's.<sup>20</sup>

Adding to the ambiguities and contradictions of the accepted body of texts, much of the knowledge of the Classical world, including that dealing with woman, was saved and transmitted to the West in translation, along with the translator's commentaries, by Spanish Moslem physicians and philosophers such as Avicenna (A.D. 980-1037), author of Canon of Medicine, "an authoritative medical text into the seventeenth century,"<sup>21</sup> and Averroës (A.D. 1126-1198), whose "powerful statements of Aristotelian doctrine were sustained among Latin scholars and thinkers well into the mid-seventeenth century."<sup>22</sup> The works salvaged by these and other erudite Moslems were invaluable to Medieval and Renaissance scholars, in spite of the fact that the appended commentaries were sometimes repressed by the Holy See as the work of heretics (MacClintock 222).

Of the ancient philosophers, two who were at the very base of the tower are Plato and Aristotle. In spite of being

the chronological forerunner, Plato's views on woman were, from a modern perspective, more "advanced" than Aristotle's. It has been debated whether Plato was an early feminist.<sup>23</sup> He did advance some radical ideas for his time regarding the position of the female in his proposed ideal society. Although later, in Laws, he reneged on his most radical positions, and although he always qualified his statements in the Republic with the declaration that women were in physical strength inferior to men and that they were, at their best, inferior to the best of men in all other traits (as noted by Annas 24), that does not erase the fact that he advocated equal education and opportunity for women in jobs to which they might be suited--and those jobs included positions in the hierarchy of his Guardian class.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately for the women in Spain during the era of Counter Reformation repressions affecting education, personal freedoms, and religion, Plato's views on beauty and ideal love had infinitely more influence on literature than did his more liberal views on the rights of women on Spain's dominant philosophies. The Humanists tried to disseminate notions similar to Plato's regarding the education of women (Plato was approved reading for Juan Luis Vives' pupil, Princess Mary).<sup>25</sup> However, the Humanists, who were often thought to hold ideas dangerously close to those of Protestantism, were much less in favor with Spanish theologians than was Plato. Thus, in Catholic, Counter Reformation Spain, both Platonic and Humanist ideas were

sometimes hidden in literary texts which, with due to their inherently symbolic and "un-real" nature, have often served as a haven for unorthodox ideas, or as stated by Vargas Llosa in speaking of the "temor" which provoked the hierarchy's actions against the novels of chivalry, "pienso que fue el miedo del mundo oficial a la imaginación, que es la enemiga natural del dogma y el origen de toda rebelión" (10).

Plato's disciple, Aristotle, considered himself a Platonist and, in many respects, that is true. However, in various instances of particular import here, his interpretation of Plato seems to have exerted a greater overt influence on the philosophical and moral knowledge of the Golden Age than some of Plato's own texts. In his definitions of woman, for example, he seems to have disregarded the advice of Plato's Socrates to "let the wives of our guardians strip [to exercise], for their virtue will be their robe, and let them share in the toils of war and the defense of their country," and concentrated on Plato's qualification that "in all of them [pursuits] a woman is inferior to a man."<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that while Greek views on sexual practices in terms of homosexual activities were more liberal than any Christian morality would admit, that does not mean that the Greeks were any less discriminatory against women nor did they hold any higher opinions of them as a group. Evidence of this can be found in the Greek views on male homosexuality wherein it

was acceptable for Greek (male) citizens to participate in a homosexual encounter with the limitation that they were never to be the passive (or "feminized") partner, that position being relegated to slaves and lower-class males.<sup>27</sup> If anything, Aristotle succeeded in taking Plato's traditional Greek misogyny to new limits, limits that informed the Western vision of woman for the next two thousand years. He emphasized Pythagoras' bi-polar construct, wherein males were on the side of light and good and women were on the side of darkness and evil (Maclean 2). Maintaining that they had been formed from imperfectly heated male semen, a process which resulted in internal sex organs, Aristotle saw women as "characterized by deprived, passive and material traits, cold and moist dominant humours and a desire for completion by intercourse with the male" (Maclean 30). In spite of believing in her desire for "completion," he also interpreted her, at the same time, as being "devoid of sexual desire . . . evidenced by the passive role she plays in copulation" (Osborne 35). Although not all later theorists agreed completely with Aristotle, their disagreeing did not usually help woman's cause, since new theories were merely jumbled on top of the old. In the thirteenth century, for example, Albertus Magnus saw woman's desire as "doubled," thus creating for her the doubly impossible role of a frigid furnace.<sup>28</sup>

Many of Aristotle's views of women that were in vogue in Golden Age Spain were based on supposition, tradition,

and prejudice. He held the same sorts of superstitions about "unclean" menstrual flow as did the Hebrews and other ancient writers (Maclean 39-40, Gies 8-9). Among other things, and as an example of just how little empiricism counted in some of his popular theories and in the later quest for knowledge by his disciples, Aristotle maintained, rather inanely, that women had fewer teeth than males.

Since the ideas of the Classical philosophers, scientists, and physicians of Greece so informed the ideas of the religious leaders and saints of the early Christian church, it is not surprising that they were frequently consulted and quoted whenever the Catholic fathers set about to refine their definitions of woman. Physicians, as members of the ruling patriarchy, were on the side of Law and the Church--as opposed to the folk-healing "witches" and the much maligned barber-surgeons (including Cervantes' father, Rodrigo). In speaking of the European situation in general, Maclean, like Foucault, marks the end of the sixteenth-century as a turning point in world affairs, stating that

many doctors at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth-centuries write eloquently against the wrong done to the honour of woman by Aristotle, and it is possible to argue that there is a feminist movement in medical spheres, where in theology there is little evidence of one" (29).

Regarding the "medical spheres," it must be remembered, however, that in Counter Reformation Spain, Church officials, government leaders, and physicians, as members of

the dominant patriarchy, frequently supported each other and touted similar ideologies.

### Catholic Stereotypes

Although there is little evidence of a "feminist" movement in theological spheres throughout the sixteenth century, there is evidence of a shift in attitudes toward the female sex as a whole within the church-based intelligentsia. The change is often subtle, and only rarely positive, but crucial to understanding the slowly evolving social roles of woman--those roles which were portrayed so well by Cervantes in his prose fiction. That Cervantes' works were directly informed, from the Galatea to the Persiles, by the works of the early Christians, particularly Augustine, has been discussed by O. H. Green in Spain and the Western Tradition. In that work Green (III 177-291) lists eight examples of Cervantes paraphrasing Saint Augustine's Confessions. In addition, in spite of the Hispanic tendency to name children after saints, the choices of the names of certain of Cervantes' characters who are involved specifically in critical discussions on love and marriage (e.g. Chrysostom, Marcella, and Ambrose) are the very Church leaders who are known for their opinions on the same topics.

What sort of influence might the views of such early theologians as those mentioned above have had on Cervantes'



vision of woman? At first glance it would seem to be a dark influence indeed. Many early church fathers such as including Augustine, Hilary, Jerome, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, in spite of passing through various individual developmental stages as they aged, all seem to demonstrate some clearly misogynist tendencies. Saint Jerome (translator of Catholicism's official Latin Vulgate), for example, described woman as "the gate of the devil, the path of wickedness, the sting of the serpent, in a word a perilous object"--a statement which, by itself, would leave little doubt as to his feelings toward women (Osborne 51). However, this is the same Jerome who wrote to the daughter-in-law of one of his students with tender instructions on how to teach her infant daughter to read (Gies 14-15). And Brown notes, in describing Jerome's mutually supportive friendships with the holy women Marcella and Paula, that "he turned away from his male colleagues, with ill-disguised contempt, in order to lavish his erudition on the devoted women of the Roman Church" (367).

Jerome's apparently ambivalent feelings toward women were not unusual. John Chrysostom was supported by the wealthy Olympias (Brown 318). Much of Ambrose's work is known to us today from letters written to his beloved sister, the consecrated virgin, Marcellina (Brown 342-343). Hilary was married. Augustine abandoned his son and his concubine of eleven years at the urging of his mother, Monica.<sup>29</sup> It is obvious that these men, later proclaimed

saints by the Catholic Church, were both attached to and profoundly affected by the women in their lives, in spite of any misogynist tendencies that may seem evident to us today in their writings.

What was the position of woman in the early Church? During the lives of the early saints (3rd-5th century), the Christian church was vying for followers with other religions. Woman in a traditional non-Christian marriage was often envisioned as breeding stock to increase manpower in the expanding pagan cities. A few virgin cults (recall the Vestal Virgins of Rome) helped cement ties to the after-life; but, in general, motherhood (with its inherent images of continuity, renewal, and expansion) was the desired goal. In contrast, for Christians, woman's role in the Church was still being defined. However, beyond their use for procreation, Christian women were wanted to immediately people the adult ranks of the believers, and to recruit more adult followers. Although the second coming was no longer felt to be quite so imminent by most fourth century leaders as it had by Paul, motherhood was still not accorded the high status among Christians (who anticipated the end of all life on earth) as it was among the pagans (who tended to view life as a continuity).<sup>30</sup> In addition, rich widows who remained unattached to a male provided much needed funds for the support of erudite religious leaders who preferred to detach themselves from the mundane problems of life. In short, independent of birth rate, newly converted women

provided an immediate surge in the number of Christians on earth while presenting the opportunity for an infusion of wealth into the church coffers. Thus, women were needed and wooed--but not particularly for their traditional role as mothers.

Virginity had steadily gained status as a virtue for both sexes. Chrysostom's exegesis of Paul's opinions on virginity (I Cor. 7) portrayed Paul as much more forcefully in favor of that state than the actual text would seem to warrant (Clark xvi-xxvii). As further support for virginity, "Mary's purity was exalted by the Church, especially in the fourth and fifth centuries when asceticism was gaining ground. The Ascetics regarded earthly life and desires as inevitably polluted, and the Church Fathers set about encouraging virginity as a way of life."<sup>31</sup> The self-denial inherent in celibacy was seen as the surest route to a better place in heaven (Clark xxi, Lucas 23) and to a spiritual union, a holy oneness as it were, with Christ-the-Other in the hereafter. The image of Christ/God as the Bridegroom/Lover as presented in Chrysostom and others (On Virginity LIX), Tertullian (De Cultu Feminarum II, xiii, qtd. in Lucas 23) persists throughout religious and mystic literature and is particularly notable in the Golden Age poetry of San Juan de la Cruz. Nevertheless, in spite of this exaltation of sexual abnegation, Christian mothers did provide Christian children for the rapidly expanding and increasingly politically powerful Christian church--a fact

that did not escape the notice of Christian rulers any more than it had pagan rulers. Therein can be found highlighted the problem of the contradictory image of the virgin-mother that has plagued Christian women for centuries.

That virginity was so highly praised is due to a combination of political and theological factors. It must be remembered that two of the main aims of early Christian leaders were: to overthrow the dominant, anti-Christian political systems of the temporal world, replacing them with a Christian kingdom on earth; and to live a life that would guarantee them and their followers entrance into the divine kingdom of the next world. For many, virginity had the best potential for fulfilling both those goals. In regard to the first, any disruption in the system of sexual traditions of a society (including any unaccepted deviations such as prostitution, transvestitism, pederasty, etc.), can be seen as a form of rebellion. In the words of Bullough, these disruptions are "a way of denying the validity of current societal standards" (Sex, Society and History 75). An organized disruption on a mass scale which denies the call of human sexuality threatens "to bring marriage and childbirth to an end. With marriage at an end, the huge fabric of organized society would crumble . . ." (Brown 32).

Many of the new Christians saw the crumbling of non-Christian societies as a goal within their power to achieve; and John Chrysostom, the "golden tongued" preacher of Antioch, was one of the most fervently in favor of the

collapse of the old order. Ironically, his aims are not wholly unlike the beliefs of courtly lovers who would have found little to disagree with in Chrysostom's statement that "where death is, there is marriage" (which calls to mind Cervantes' Grisóstomo who, rejected by the independent Marcela, chose death).<sup>32</sup> Although marriage was considered a useful aid to curb lust in On Virginity, Chrysostom assured his listeners that virginity made "those who spend time on earth live like the angels dwelling in heaven . . . the virgins of the Church will meet with many magnificent blessings that will surpass the comprehension of the human eye, ear and thought (Chrysostom XI-2,15)." Further, "the practice of virginity in John's opinion, posed a direct challenge to the city" and "he repeatedly told his Christian audiences that their bodies belonged to themselves, and no longer to the city" (Brown 306). Thus, it can be said that celibacy and denial of desire had political undertones as well as religious significance.

And what of the religious motivations? In regard to the Christian goal of achieving entrance into the kingdom of heaven or, more specifically, of achieving unity or oneness with Christ, motherhood and sexual relations were quickly interpreted as rival interests to the divine union. Christ himself was said to be celibate. Paul, in spite of his ambiguities, can be interpreted as favoring abstinence. Celibacy came to be viewed as the most desired state in a truly Christian existence, the surest path to unity with the

"Beloved" in eternal life. In the early Church, virgins of both sexes were valued, with Christian women being elevated to the status of "men" by their strength of will and dedication to "reason". Celibacy was so desired by the early leaders that Tertullian (who was married) declared that "a stain on one's chastity was even more dreadful `than any punishment or any death'" (Bullough, Women and Prostitution 62). Origen had himself castrated. Augustine was linked for many years to the Manichaeans, who advocated total abstinence for all members of the Elect. With such a degree of importance attached to abstinence, celibate men feared anything that might provoke feelings of desire, thus endangering their purity and ultimately, their salvation. They feared the reflection of their own most perilous weakness, and that reflection, was seen to be incarnate in woman. Unlike the courtly lover who desired for the sake of desiring itself, and who loved the woman who mirrored his desire, what the Christian ascetics desired was to not desire. Women were feared and hated for reflecting men's own weakness for earthly pleasures--a weakness that could lead to the dissensions of hell and away from eternal life in unity with the Beloved Bridegroom in Paradise. It is likely that men were equally feared by celibate women, but "since the Church Fathers were male, and many of them became conscious of the physical desires of their bodies when in the presence of women, misogyny became engrained in Christianity" (Bullough, Women and Prostitution 71).

By the time of Thomas Aquinas, the Christian Church had become well-established as a world power. Christ still had not come. Desire had not been eradicated or overcome. Marriage, sex, and procreation had not been stopped. Among Christian men, the double standard that had existed in the Greek and Roman civilizations remained strong. And misogyny, formerly used as a aid to maintaining male celibacy, had become institutionalized in its own right. Debates centered on the question of the existence of a female soul. In spite of a wave of feminist activity in the twelfth century, "Christianity turned out to be a male-centered, sex-negative religion with strong misogynistic tendencies and suspicion of female sexuality" (Bullough, Women and Prostitution 71). Previously, Augustine had emphasized woman's equality to man in terms of reason, and her inferiority in terms of body only, thus laying the ground for asserting that continence could mitigate her inferiority. However, in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas, whose methods formed the base of Medieval Scholasticism, chose to return to Aristotle's conception of the female as a misbegotten male whose sole purpose was reproduction. In his view, marriage was a sacrament designed specifically for women; but within the terms of that sacrament, they were obliged to meet their husband's demands even when those demands were immoral. The picture for women was not always totally bleak. Marianism, in religion, and Courtly love, in popular literature, offered some contrast to the view of woman as an inherently

evil daughter of Eve. Nevertheless, even as things seemed to improve, Christian women began to lose their influence as members of the Church hierarchy. As indicated by Shulamith Shahar:

It is interesting to note that the phenomenon of both monks and nuns being ruled by a woman came to an end precisely in the period when the feminine element in divinity was elevated . . . This emphasis on the feminine element was not accompanied by elevation of the practical status of women in general, or even of the nun within the religious community.<sup>33</sup>

Even in the Greek and Roman civilizations, women had been used as the scapegoats for the evils of the world. "Witches" (but relatively few male "sorcerers") were burned in waves of mass hysteria, which according to Julio Caro Baroja culminated in "the great crisis of the Baroque Period."<sup>34</sup> By 1513 Protestantism had emerged in Germany as a counter force to Catholicism--but provided little solace for women, with Luther himself exhorting, "Let them bear children to death; they are created for that."<sup>35</sup> In the early sixteenth-century, in the backlash of the Counter Reformation, missionary and pastoral work were closed to Catholic women, causing a decrease in the numbers of new female saints being added to the Catholic calendar (Wiesner 14). In Protestant countries Catholic nuns were persecuted and convents were closed. In Spain, nuns and prioresses begged for support from a government so busy with economic problems surrounding New World exploration that their pleas were often in vain. One particularly poignant account from Madrid describes the frustration of desperate nuns who had



been told repeatedly by the king to look for some other remedy:

La priora y monxas de la conzepzion hieronima de Madrid dizen es tan muy nezeitadas [sic] y les falta mucha hazienda para sustentarse el convento y cumplir con obligacion por las grandes deudas que tienen y demas desto tienen un quarto que se les viene al suelo que a no remediarse el haria en mucho detrimento la guarda de la casa y se seguiria grande escandalo como otras vezes an si[g]nificado a Vuestra Majestad suplicandole por alguna merced y limosna[.] Siempre se las a respondido no a lugar en lo que pedian y mandandoles buscasen otra cosa en que se les pudiese hazer merced . . . [illegible] otra vez [h]an representado a Vuestra Majestad que esta vac[i]o el dicho hofizio honorable del Chanziller de la audiencia de las Charcas en que V.M. les puede hazer merced que con el valor del se remediara todas estas necesidades pues V.M. es amparo de todas las religiones [?] [religiosas?] les suplican se duela desta casa la Benignidad y misericordia que V.M. usa con todos los nezesitados. En hello se haze muy grande servic[i]o a nuestro Señor.<sup>36</sup>

As the Spanish economic and political situations continued the downward spiral that had begun even before the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, moralists kept up their ranting against the wiles and inherent guilt of women. In 1651 in his El Criticón, Baltasar Gracián described women in scathing terms:

Hácnle guerra al hombre diferentes tentaciones, en sus edades diferentes, unas en la mocedad y otras en la vejez, pero la mujer en todas. Nunca está seguro de ellas ni mozo ni varón, ni viejo ni sabio, ni valiente ni aun santo. Siempre está tocando al arma este enemigo común . . . <sup>37</sup>

Women found themselves provided with two role models-- Mary, the Virgin Mother and impossible symbol of absolute perfection; and Eve, the Evil Temptress and symbol of temptation and destruction. Moreover, they were frequently

likened to Eve rather than Mary. In modern terminology, "because women's nature was 'other,' it was a nature to be feared . . . [and] misogyny . . . was a response to this fear and an attempt to keep women safely within their prescribed roles where they could present no danger to men."38

#### The Humanist Vision of Woman

Erasmian Humanism, with its criticism of the corrupt, greedy, and materialistic hegemony of the priesthood, and its emphasis on the importance of the interior spirit of the individual Christian, the return to the teachings of the early Church fathers, the belief in the right of all Christians--both "new" and "old," and of whatever ethnic background--to a place in the mystic body of Christ, and especially, the right of all Christians to the opportunity to study the word of God without the mediation of a third party, was particularly attractive to the many people in Spain, including many of the poor and women of all classes. However, Erasmus was not favored by everyone. In 1526, the Spanish Humanist Juan Maldonado wrote to Erasmus informing him of the incredible success of his works in Spain--specifically among the uneducated populace and among women who were reading his works--but who were forced to do so in defiance of their confessors:

Para éstas, añadía Maldonado, y para cuantos no saben

latín, muchos eruditos trabajan en traducir a nuestra lengua obritas tuyas. Ya el Enchiridion ha salido en español, y con tener muchos millares de ejemplares impresos, no logran los impresores contentar a la muchedumbre de los compradores. También algunos diálogos de los Coloquios traducidos al español vuelan en manos de hombres y mujeres.<sup>39</sup>

Humanism's goals of returning to early Christian ideals and reclaiming Classical Greek and Latin texts accomplished a good deal, at least temporarily, for those women who were not satisfied with traditional roles. In spite of statements of a decidedly misogynist nature made in the fifteenth century by the most famous Humanists, before their fall from favor they helped to draft some of the most promising philosophical advances for the women of their time in matters of education, self concept, and family position.

Although many of the ideas of Humanism can be traced back to the Greeks and Romans, Humanism as a recognizable movement developed in Italy and began to spread to the rest of Europe in the middle of the fourteenth century. The time of its arrival and the circumstances of the early spread of its influence in Spain are not of particular importance here, but it is interesting to note that some researchers cite Alfonso X, "El Sabio," as a medieval precursor of Spanish Humanism. Among these is Ottavio di Camillo, who notes that "before the first occurrence of the word 'humanista' was to be recorded in 1552, the impact of Humanism, as it manifested itself in Spain, had been felt in all aspects of the cultural life."<sup>40</sup>

The best known of the scholars of Spanish Humanism,

including Marcel Bataillon and Américo Castro, are not always in agreement regarding the extent of Humanist influence on Spanish culture and specifically on Cervantes (Castro, in fact, does not even agree with himself), but it is agreed that Humanism did affect the works of many well known Spanish writers, philosophers, and religious leaders.<sup>41</sup> The most famous of the European Humanists, Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, enjoyed a great deal of popularity in Spain and was favored not only by the Inquisitor General, Cardinal Alfonso Manrique, and others of the highest church dignitaries, but also was held in high esteem by Charles V himself. A listing of the most famous Spanish Humanists would include Juan Luis Vives, who dedicated his De Institutione Feminae Christianae to Queen Isabella's daughter, Catherine of Aragon; Juan de Valdés, author of Diálogo de la lengua; Fray Francisco de Osuna, who is said to have inspired the mysticism of Santa Teresa; and Fray Luis de León, teacher, poet, and author of the Humanist marriage manual, La perfecta casada.

As cited earlier, Gerda Lerner in The Creation of Patriarchy (54), states that one of the earliest policies that contributed to a continuing tradition of women being denied positions of power in developing civilizations was that of denying women the right to an education. Many Humanists were staunchly in favor of education for women--or at least, a "sufficient" education, so in that respect Humanism was an improvement over other traditional

philosophies. Vives stated that "without a correct upbringing and sufficient knowledge virtue is impossible."<sup>42</sup> The qualifying term "sufficient" was, of course, a limiting factor open to individual interpretation; but even so, it was better than advocating no education at all. Although Humanism did not do away with the vision of the subservient female it did provide a fresh look at women as valuable flesh and blood beings with their own ideas and worthy intellects.

Humanism suffered as a result of Counter Reformation restrictions which had been instituted to combat Protestant influence, but Humanist ideas were more liberal in some matters regarding women's responsibilities and rights than those of leading Protestants, such as Luther and Calvin.<sup>43</sup> While they were advising absolute obedience to all husbands, even non-converted ones, at least one Humanist, Fray Luis de León, in La perfecta casada, encouraged women to disobey their Catholic husbands in small matters of charity, if the wives felt it was for the good of the husbands. In spite of the fact that he then all but renounced what he had just allowed ("porque si el marido no quiere, está obligado a querer; y su mujer, si no le obedece en su mal antojo . . . trata con utilidad y provecho su alma dél y su hacienda") by adding clarifications and qualifications ("Esto que he dicho, entiendo de las limosnas más ordinarias y comunes . . . en lo que fuere más grueso y más particular, la mujer no ha de traspasar la ley del marido, y en todo le ha de

obedecer y servir"), the advocacy of any disobedience, like the advocacy of education, was a significant step. Unfortunately, for his suspicious ideas and teachings and for allegedly translating the Bible's Song of Songs, Fray Luis was imprisoned by the Inquisition (1572-1576).<sup>44</sup>

In a country suffering from the effects of a thriving business of a corrupt religious monopoly, such as Spain, it is not surprising that Erasmus' satirical barbs and religious and educational advice should have appealed to those oppressed. It is even less surprising that the oppressors, in a struggle to maintain their position, should have resisted the infiltration of Erasmian ideas and humanist "liberalism" in general with every means at their disposal. In spite of the existence of impressive numbers of proponents of Humanist ideas from among the nobility and the erudite Catholic hierarchy, including members of the early Inquisition, those clerics who felt threatened by imminent changes in their world, were able to turn Humanism into a weapon against by interpreting Erasmus' popular satires of unscrupulous priests as heretical complaints against Catholic teachings. That Erasmus' criticisms were just must have made the clerics' fears--and their resistance--even keener.

Erasmian ideas were particularly vulnerable for two reasons: their undeniable affinity with the tenets of the heretical sect of Illuminism, which gave primary importance to personal prayer, to the detriment of ceremony and priest-

directed sacraments; and the popularity of Erasmus' works with members of that forbidden sect. Support by the alumbrados or iluminados for the interiorization and individualization of prayer and religion, which would make the services of priests superfluous, was one of the main causes of the move to eradicate the popularity of Erasmus from Spain. Moreover, his direct criticism of the exterior ceremonies of the Church and of the utilization of Catholic wealth put Erasmus dangerously close to the rebellious Martin Luther. Since the interpreting of ideas, statements, actions out of context was in total conformity with the prevailing traditions of religion and education in Spain, the undermining of Humanism was possible in spite of the support of influential and powerful individuals within the system. Following the death of the Inquisitor Manrique, the Inquisition, which had originally been re-instituted by the enlightened and Humanist-educated Isabella to help maintain the purity of the Catholic faith, being bound by the stringent rules of its own system, was forced into service by the determined anti-Humanist clerics.

Never quite in step with the rest of Europe, Counter Reformation Spain rapidly became a closed nation, a sharp contrast to Isabella and Ferdinand's "open society, which had been eager for, and receptive to, contemporary foreign ideas."<sup>45</sup> Erasmian ideas were already dangerous by the time of Cervantes' birth in 1547 and well before the publication of the first Index of Prohibited Books ("el indice de libros

prohibidos") in 1545. In 1532, the wife of the playwright Lope de Rueda, María de Cazalla, was arrested by the Inquisition for her questionable beliefs and evangelizing. A "well-read" woman, she "had developed her own doctrine, a mixture of the dexamiento (abandonment) of the alumbrados and Erasmus' `philosophy of Christ.'"<sup>46</sup> Although acquitted in 1534 after almost three years of torture, humiliation, and deprivation, she serves as an excellent example of the dangers of being an educated woman with unorthodox ideas in the sixteenth-century.

Although Erasmus' Colloquies had been used as school texts, by 1535, political pressure exerted by the outraged clerics resulted in Charles V declaring their use in schools a capital offense. Only some of Erasmus' works, including the Colloquies which, as noted by McKendrick (8), contained a detailed exposition of his views on women, appeared on the 1551 Spanish Index. More were included in 1559, and a general prohibition against all of his works was published in the Index of 1583.<sup>47</sup> While it may seem that these prohibitions would have effectively eliminated the possibility of Humanist influence on Cervantes' works and on his creation of women characters, it must be remembered that repression does not guarantee eradication of either ideas or texts. Modern scholars, including Bataillon, Castro, and Forcione continue to find evidence of Humanist influence throughout Cervantes' works.



Notes

<sup>1</sup> Malón de Chaide, Pedro. La conversión de la Magdalena, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos-Espasa-Calpe, 1959) 24-27.

<sup>2</sup> Mariló Vigil, La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986) See especially 67-70.

<sup>3</sup> Otis H. Green, Spain and the Western Tradition: The Castilian Mind in Literature from "El Cid" to Calderón, 4 vols. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1963) 1: 92.

<sup>4</sup> Fernando de Rojas, La Celestina, ed. Julio Cejador y Frauca, 2 vols. (Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos-Espasa-Calpe, 1959) 1: 41.

<sup>5</sup> Archivo Municipal de Sevilla, Sección Especial 11, Conde de Aguila, Efemérides, Tomo 20. See for data on "autos de fe" in Seville. For example, in 1560, 6 men and 9 women were burned in the town square. On April 26 of 1562, 12 were burned as "Lutherans", including 2 clerics and 2 friars. In July of 1563, six were burned and another six in 1564, etc.

<sup>6</sup> See Allen's FN 26, DQ I, 136.

<sup>7</sup> See Mario Vargas Llosa's prologue "Carta de batalla por Tirant lo Blanc." Tirant lo Blanc I, By Joanot Martorell. J.F. Vidal Jové, tr. (Madrid: Alianza, 1969) 9-41 and Edward T. Aylward, Tirant lo Blanch (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Fernando de Rojas, La Celestina, Julio Cejador y Frauca, ed. (Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos-Espasa-Calpe, 1962) 53, 60 and Joanot Martorell, Tirant lo Blanc, David H. Rosenthal, tr. (New York: Schocken Books, 1984) 395.

<sup>9</sup> Frances Gies and Joseph Gies, Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) 135-141.

<sup>10</sup> Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, Amadís de Gaula, ed.

Angel Rosenblat (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca Contemporánea-Losada, 1963) 124.

11 Juan Bautista Avalor-Arce, La novela pastoril española, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Ediciones Istmo, 1974) 81.

12 Jorge Montemayor, Los siete libros de la Diana, ed. Francisco López Estrada (Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos-Espasa-Calpe, 1946) 87-88.

13 Fray Luis de León, La perfecta casada, 12th ed. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe-Austral, 1938). See especially, 30-41. For evidence of the continuity of thinking regarding women's nature and roles see: La Condesa de A., La mujer en la familia: La hija, la esposa, la madre (Barcelona: Monataner y Simón, 1907). This book on etiquette shows how passive, frail, and submissive women in Spain were sometimes advised to be by "authorities" on female behavior.

14 P. W. Bomli, La femme dans l'Espagne du siècle d'or, (La Haya: Martinus Nijhoff, 1950) 352.

15 Rojas lists some of her potion ingredients such as snake oil and dragon's wing (142-145) and presents a scene where Areusa is appraised, praised, and caressed by Celestina--"Déxame mirarte toda, a mi voluntad, que me huelgo," (249).

16 Antonio Rey and Francisco Abad, introducción, La lozana andaluza, by Francisco Delicado (Madrid: EDAF, 1977). See Rey's introduction (10), for a summary of Rojas' influence on Delicado.

17 Harold Bloom, A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975) 19.

18 Michel Foucault, The Order of Things. (New York: Vintage Books-Random House, 1973) 50.

19 Vern L. Bullough, Sex, Society, and History (New York: Science History Publications, 1976) 44.

20 Ian Maclean, The Renaissance Notion of Woman (1980; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988) 29-30.

21 Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1972 reprint ed.

22 Stuart MacClintock, "Averroës," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1972 reprint ed.

23 Julia Annas, "Plato's Republic and Feminism," Osborne 24. In this article, Annas discusses the various arguments for and against Plato's "feminism."

24 Plato, "The Equality of Women," The Republic of Plato, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (1941; New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) 144-155.

25 Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956) 73.

26 The Dialogues of Plato, 3rd ed., trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford University Press, 1892) qtd. in Osborne 22-23.

27 Peter Brown, The Body and Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 30. See also Vern L. Bullough's essays on homosexuality, particularly: "Sex in History: A Virgin Field" and "Homosexuality as Submissive Behavior: Example from Mythology" (Bullough, Sex, Society and History 1-16 and 37-42).

28 Frances and Joseph Gies, Women in the Middle Ages (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1978) 50-51.

29 Vern and Bonnie Bullough, Women and Prostitution: A Social History (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1987) 69.

30 Elizabeth A. Clark, Introduction, On Virginity: Against Remarriage, by John Chrysostom, trans. Sally Rieger Shore, Studies in Women and Religion 9 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983) xiii-xiv.

31 Angela M. Lucas, Women in the Middle Ages: Religion, Marriage and Letters (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983) 20.

32 John Chrysostom, On Virginity--Against Remarriage, trans. Sally Rieger Shore (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983) On Virginity XIV-6, 22.

33 Shulamith Shahar, The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages (London: Methuen, 1983) 31-32.

34 Julio Caro Baroja, The World of Witches, trans. O. N. V. Glendinning; 1961 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975) 201.

35 D. Martin Luthers sämtliche Werke (Erlangen and Frankfurt, 1826-57) 20:84, qtd. in Wiesner 13.

36 Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla, España. Charcas 1,32, 2[?] de marzo 1586.

37 Baltasar Gracián, El Criticón, Obras completas, ed. E. Correa Calderón (Madrid: Aguilar, 1944) 521. Also qtd. in C. R. Boxer, Mary and Misogyny, 99-100.

38 Carole Levin, Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1987) 14.

39 Quoted by Marcel Bataillon his prologue to El Enquiridion o manual del caballero cristiano, by Desiderius Erasmus, ed., Dámaso Alonso (Madrid: Aguirre, 1932) 23.

40 Ottavio Di Camillo, "Humanism in Spain," Humanism Beyond Italy, vol. 2 of Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy, ed. Albert Rabil, Jr., 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1988) 94.

41 Alban K. Forcione, Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: A Study of Four Exemplary Novels (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982) 9-27. Forcione discusses Castro's evolution from the early days of the first

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45 J. H. Elliott, Imperial Spain: 1469-1716 (1963; New York: Meridian-New American Library, 1977) 126.

46 Milagros Ortega Costa, "Spanish Women in the Reformation," Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989) 94-95.

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### CHAPTER 3 THE REAL WOMEN

Some flesh and blood women of Golden Age Spain may have tried to live up to the models espoused by their phallocratic society, but those models were, for the most part, beyond the reach of even the most holy. Bruce Wardropper, in his essay "Cervantes' Don Quijote" assures his readers that "man, notwithstanding the catechism, does not in his heart believe truth to be categorical: he resists the dualistic tendencies of ecclesiastical orthodoxy."<sup>1</sup> In a minor confirmation of this, there is some evidence that, as far as religious ideals were concerned, the sensual, converted prostitute, Mary Magdalene, had been added to the Eve-Mary dichotomy as a third role model for women in Spain by the end of the sixteenth-century, reaching cult status by the seventeenth, "perhaps [as] a reaction to the puritanical tendencies of the sixteenth-century Counter Reformation."<sup>2</sup> This model, successfully melding animal desire with holy fervor, offered hope for the always imperfect. In addition to these three models, women had, of course, the female saints and martyrs to emulate, although, as mentioned earlier, the numbers of new female saints added to the Church calendar after the start of the Counter Reformation

decreased dramatically (Wiesner 14). Even Humanism aimed for goals impractical and undesirable for the masses of everyday women. As stated by Vigil:

sería un error de bulto el creer que las mujeres españolas del siglo XVI eran como la perfecta casada de fray Luis de León o como la fémina cristiana de Juan Luis Vives. En toda sociedad existen instituciones formales e instituciones latentes; y en toda sociedad hay una tensión entre el sistema ideológico y las instituciones concretas. (Vigil 4)

For these everyday women there were other earthly role models against which to measure themselves.

#### The Role Models

Although the seventeenth-century lacked the technological advances in mass communications enjoyed by today's world, just as today's movies stars and major political figures provide role models for modern youth, the most well-known of the Golden Age celebrities must have served as patterns for the young of that era. Tirso de Molina, the seventeenth-century playwright who is known for his outstanding female characters, had his young, independent and very intelligent heroine, Jerónima, in El amor médico, explain to her maid her admiration for both Queen Isabella and Isabella's Latin teacher, Beatriz Galindo, who founded the the convent and hospital "La Latina" in Madrid:

La reina Doña Isabel,  
que a tanta hazaña dio fin,  
empieza a estudiar latín,

y es su preceptora en él  
 otra que por peregrina  
 no hay ingenio que no asombre,  
 tanto que olviden su nombre  
 y la llaman 'la Latina'  
 Por esto quiero imitalla. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Outside of fiction, both women had shown themselves to be outstanding role models and worthy of imitation. It is unfortunate that one of Isabella's best known and perhaps most lastingly influential legacies was her reinstitution of the dreaded Inquisition. On the positive side, it is important to note that she believed not only in education for herself, as indicated by Tirso's *Jerónima*, but for her daughters as well. However, true to tradition, she did not question woman's inferior role in society in general. Isabella maintained and ruled her kingdom of Castile as a separate entity apart from Ferdinand's Aragon and claimed America for Castile's Crown alone. Besides Isabella, other members of Spanish royalty provided highly visible figures. Isabella's erudite daughter, Catherine of Aragon, who was married for political purposes to Henry VIII of England, was such a magnetic figure that the English populace supported her against their own native-born king. Nor did the magnetism fade with time. In his book *Mujeres españolas*, the historian Salvador de Madariaga said of her: "Al acercarnos a Catalina de Aragón pronto nos damos cuenta de que estamos en presencia de una de las almas grandes de Europa."<sup>4</sup>

Some royal figures were not exemplary. Isabella's daughter and Catherine's sister, Juana was known by the



sobriquet "la loca." Whether her insanity was due, as suggested by Pfandl, to the philandering ways and early death of her husband, to the vagaries of genetics (Isabella's mother also went insane), or to some other cause will never be known.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, what is most remembered about the pathetic figure of Juana, and what may have stood out most to her contemporary sisters, is the fact that she had to give up her throne to her grandson, Charles V.

Royalty surely provided a large number of opportunities for producing women of power, but educated women could also be found in other quarters. Ortega Costa relates the account of Isabel Ortiz, who was a servant in the house of Isabel de Aragón, the daughter of a silversmith, and the abandoned wife of another silversmith. In spite of her low social standing, Ortiz read, studied and eventually wrote her own book of devotions. Her open sympathies with the "alumbrados" soon led to her arrest by the Inquisition. Although she was released, it is noteworthy that one of the main complaints of her accusers and the witnesses called to testify against her was that she, a woman, had dared to write a book.

Convents were not generally the most luxurious of places (in spite of some exceptions), but they did shelter some very capable intellectuals. Cervantes died before Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz became known, but undoubtedly he was aware of Saint Theresa of Avila's writing. Her autobiography or Vida, written at the behest of her spiritual confessor,

is, in spite of her self-deprecating statements to the contrary, the work of an intelligent and educated woman.

The New World brought new chances for women wishing to take a more active role in their society. There are some known instances of women who rebelled and succeeded, as in the case of Catalina de Erauso. Unhappy with her life as a nun, she fled her convent for Seville and then embarked for the New World disguised as a man. There, for nearly twenty years, she lived a successful life as a soldier and a mule-driver. She only revealed her sex to save herself from execution for killing a man. Following her revelation, she was returned to Spain by the authorities. Her life was so exceptional that news of her exploits reached both the Spanish king and the Pope in Rome. The Efemérides in the Municipal Archives in Seville records the ceremony performed in the Seville Cathedral there which permitted her legally to dress as a man.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, for ordinary, everyday women in Golden Age Spain, probably the most influential role models were family members-- mothers, aunts, sisters and other female relatives. Modern sociologists recognize the importance of understanding everyday living and everyday people in our quest for knowledge of both the past and present. As noted by Weigert, "everyday life is a rich source of evidence for, and genuine knowledge of, the processes and structures which make men and women tick as believable and authentic humans-- or fail to do so . . . each of us must attempt [the quest

for understanding everyday life], if we are to win an adequate understanding of the human condition in the modern world."<sup>7</sup> Thus an understanding of everyday role models in Golden Age Spain is essential to an understanding of Cervantes' women.

#### Education and Occupations for Women

According to Heller, "until very recently, the everyday knowledge which women were expected to appropriate was quite different from that incumbent upon men."<sup>8</sup> Although not compulsory for either sex, education for women existed in varying degrees as the Renaissance and Golden Age progressed, but even in the best of times, for most women, educational opportunities were much more limited than for men. A report on 1626 statistics from the town of Andújar indicates that although all the clerics, public officials and gentlemen in the town could read and write, only half of their wives had the same skills. Of course, poorer citizens and rural citizens had fewer reading skills than city dwellers, but in any area, as would be expected, there were always far fewer women who could read than men.<sup>9</sup> During the Counter Reformation, the increased support for a rigid Catholic orthodoxy helped make educational opportunities and a commitment to education as a desirable part of a civilized life less available for everyone--male or female. Foreign book importation was banned. Under Phillip II, study

at foreign universities was outlawed.<sup>10</sup> University enrollment plummeted with some universities closing down (Domingu ez Ortiz 375). Women, who had been taught from birth to downplay their intelligence, who had been taught self abnegation and denial, who had been given an inferior position in their society and supposedly in their biological "gifts" from God, lost a great deal of ground during the Counter Reformation in the area of education just as in so many other areas. Educated women were frequently suspected of unorthodox activities, particularly if they were imprudent enough to voice any original opinions concerning Church doctrine. The Inquisition was quick to question anyone with opinions, and outspoken or eccentric women throughout history have frequently suffered as scapegoats for their society's ills. Since women were already filling the scapegoat role created by Eve, their position was doubly dangerous. Ortega Costa documents the abrupt change in attitudes towards education for women from one generation to the next in families of similar economic status and background wherein the earlier family's daughters were studying Erasmus (in 1524) and the later family's daughters were not allowed to learn to read or write (98). This change is also confirmed by the attitudes detectable in the literature and drama of the seventeenth-century, especially when contrasted with that of the relatively liberal sixteenth century (McKendrick 13).

As was also the case with men, the subjects taught to

women, when they were allowed to learn, varied in content and depth according to their social class. There existed both private and group education with priests sometimes serving as instructors. Convents often ran schools, as can be verified by the numerous notations to be found in archives, such as the Municipal Archive in Seville, regarding requests for aid, wills from school benefactors, and occasional complaints about unsuitable orphan girls being placed in the schools. In addition to women's traditional skills such as cooking, embroidery, weaving, and sometimes singing and dancing (which Erasmus actually approved of for exercise purposes, if it were "decent") noble and wealthy daughters might learn a bit (or more) of Plato, Aristotle, and the philosophers, Latin, and Greek, in addition to the basic battery of reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious instruction.<sup>11</sup> Merchant daughters in the Golden Age, as in the Middle Ages, might be taught to do bookkeeping, take orders and do inventories. Poor daughters, like both of their parents (unless the unlikely event occurred that they were orphaned and sent by a benefactor to a convent school or married off to a literate man who needed their help in his business), would almost certainly participate only in the oral culture described so well in literature.

Since educational opportunities were limited for most women not born to the wealthy class and to many women in that class, particularly after the start of the Counter

Reformation, jobs for women frequently involved specific household skills and might be termed subsistence efforts rather than careers. One thing is certain, when women were needed for economic survival, practical estimations of their mental and even physical inferiority tended to diminish rapidly in proportion to that need. Women were active colonists and settlers in both the Reconquest of Spain in the Middle Ages and the settling of the New World in later centuries. Moreover, their help was not refused when needed during battles to defend towns from Moslem or native Indian attackers and there are recorded cases on both sides of the Atlantic of Spanish women taking up arms for both defensive and offensive purposes. There are also instances of female highway robbers and murderers. From a review of existing town records in the Archivo Histórico Nacional and other archives for the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and from the literature and fiction of those times, it can be determined that women frequently worked, (sometimes in cooperation with their husbands or families) as wine and cheesemakers and sellers, shop owners, roadside or corner fruit and other comestibles vendors, laundresses, innkeepers or tavern owners and seamstresses. Farm wives have always worked alongside their husbands.

One traditional female role that also evolved sometimes into a job, i.e., that of the family health-care giver, could actually have a very dangerous side. Like the intellectual females who provoked fear with their knowledge

of the mysterious male-dominated Word, folkhealers, midwives, and even wetnurses who dealt with life, death and reproduction, provoked many Inquisition trials. Medicine was limited to the domain of formally educated men (in spite of the fact that the "education" that they received was seriously lacking in true medical knowledge with experimentation and autopsies either discouraged or forbidden entirely)<sup>12</sup>. Women who encroached on that masculine terrain with their own type of medical knowledge (that was often more reliable for being based largely on practical experience) were in danger of having to defend themselves against the charge of witchcraft. Of course, some women risked themselves by advertising their abilities to dabble in what we today still consider the supernatural, as was the case with the 22-year-old woman burned to death in Seville after being convicted of claiming to be able to predict the future (as cited earlier).<sup>13</sup> Of course, confessing to the Inquisition does not guarantee that the accused was "guilty" as charged. In light of some of the outlandish activities people confessed to under torture it seems reasonable to conclude that oftentimes jealous neighbors or other earthly enemies leveled accusations for their own reasons. Moreover, this case is suspicious for another reason--the victim is specified as being 22 years old--and "witches" notoriously were either haggard and old (too undesirable) or young and beautiful (too desirable). Even though Inquisition confessions are unreliable, some

traditions in Spain--particularly women's traditions-- did, and do today, encourage fortune-telling as an integral part of daily life.

It is known that women often suffered under the law for filling roles that were common to their sex--herbalist, nurse-caregiver, midwife, and witch. But how were they otherwise treated in the legal world? Although, as described by Dillard, Spain's position as frontier between Europe and Africa, and Spain's traditional inheritance laws, had afforded Spanish townswomen a somewhat better position in many respects, both legal and practical, than many other European women, they were particularly affected by the later refinements made on the system of patriarchal hierarchy which had been solidified, centralized, and strengthened, ironically, by their greatest queen and female role model, Isabella. In the "frontier days" of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, women had been needed-- and wooed-- not just to repopulate lands taken back from the Moors but also to help hold and even defend those lands. Town fathers were so anxious to attract females (particularly after the eleventh century) that they would defend fleeing women and their lovers from pursuing husbands, provided, of course, that the couple agreed to settle in the town.

Townsmen were immediately necessary to seize and defend territory against Muslim repossession, but townswomen were equally essential to the long-term success of the dual enterprise of expanding southward and colonizing permanently the Peninsula. Women therefore played indispensable roles as settlers, wives of colonizers, mothers of successive



generations of defenders, and vital members of the new Hispanic communities.<sup>14</sup>

However, once the lands had been settled and the populations stabilized, women found their town "privileges" slipping away.

In the town of Seville, for example, women were able to support themselves when there was work in stocking the fleet for the New World, but once that fleet had sailed, they were left to be governed by the few men remaining in town, men who often seemed to care little for their well-being and who burdened them with laws regulating their small enterprises to such an extent that many were forced to enter into, remain in, or return to prostitution in order to avoid starvation. An example of the problem women had obtaining municipal licenses from town officials can be found in Seville's Municipal Archives in the Escribanías de Cabildo for the sixteenth century wherein Inés García, who identified herself as a former prostitute who sold fruit by the town wall in order to sustain her family ("y no tengo por tener casa alquilada que no es vendiendo allí por me sustentar"), was arrested by "el secutor[?]" (manuscript illegible) Medina".<sup>15</sup>

Still, in matters of work, what separated Spanish women from most contemporary European women were the traditions of female inheritance in Spain dating from Visigothic tribal days. Unlike the situations suffered in many other countries, legitimate Spanish daughters and wives, like

their male relatives, were able to inherit, own, manage, and dispose of their own property. This effectively opened many avenues to independence and resulted in women of authority in higher level careers such as shipping, book publishing, and industry. However, it must be noted here that "legitimate" is a key word. Natural daughters frequently had to fight for rights automatically granted to their legitimate sisters. The General Archives of the Indies in Seville records the pleas for dispensations (in order to qualify to receive financial aid) submitted by women whose fathers had died fighting in the New World. One particular case dealing with Isabel de Marmolejo, the natural daughter of Francisco Marmolejo, "conquistador de Nueva España" and governor of the province of Santa Marta, appears intermittently during the space of more than thirteen years, until she is finally given some assistance in 1590.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the roles that sometimes opened to women as mentioned above, women also filled less common positions. Again in the Archives of the Indies, there is documentation regarding a woman who served as acting governor of the Island of Margarita following the loss of the male governor in an Indian raid. It would seem to have been a very active and concerned governorship, judging from the series of letters sent to the king requesting money for supplies, guns, and ammunition to defend the island against further attacks by Indians and privateers.<sup>17</sup> Although not as exciting as being a governor of a wild island in the New

World, some women were poets, writers, or actresses. (The mother of Cervantes' illegitimate daughter was a married actress). Noblewomen, contrary to what one might think, did not always lead the gala life portrayed in fiction. Being a "lady-in-waiting" to a woman of the upper nobility certainly did not guarantee a life of idleness; and in fact, in many cases, holding a title was a job in itself. Hernan Cortes' daughter-in-law, the Marquesa del Valle, appears in letters in the Indiferentes Generales section of the General Archives throughout a good portion of the sixteenth century. Following the imprisonment-for-life of her husband for his role in a New Spain rebellion, the Marquesa's numerous plaintive letters reveal her frustrations in attempting to maintain her family's estate, plead her husband's case, and take care of her imprisoned husband's physical well-being the best that she could from a distance. The letters only end with his death.

Like the Marquesa del Valle, many of the women appearing in letters soliciting the king's intervention have easily recognizable names--women such as Francisca Pizarro and Beatriz Coya (a noble Inca daughter); yet oftentimes, even in the more well-known families, the women's letters focus on financial problems experienced after the death or the falling into disfavor of their male protectors--either fathers, husbands, or both. And, in the everyday life of common women, although many did work, their roles, just as in the case of the Marquesa del Valle, were most often

determined by the woman's relationship with a dominant male figure in her life. In the religious world, that bastion of feminine independence, active missionary work was increasingly discouraged for women, with passive prayer under the watchful eye of a male bishop being encouraged as a suitable female role. As always, woman's assigned role was categorized by her society in terms of her tie to the dominant male figure in her life, that is, as noted by Vigil in her La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII, in spite of any career or outside activity, woman was first and foremost a wife, widow, maiden, nun, or prostitute.

#### Maidens, Nuns, and Prostitutes

To be an unattached woman in Golden Age Spain was to be in a state of limbo, waiting for your permanent role to come into play. Maidens (or "doncellas") were placed in society according to the positions of their fathers, who were, in theory, merely caretakers of their daughters for their future husbands. The family honor rested with the chastity of the daughters as well as the wives, and to a lesser degree with the other female relatives. As noted by Vigil (145)

En lo que se refiere a la familia, el honor del padre y por extensión, el honor de la familia--incluidos los miembros femeninos de la misma--, descansaba en la incuestionable fidelidad de la esposa y en la igualmente incuestionable virginidad de las hijas.

Maidens who had passed marriageable age and for

whatever reasons were not bound for the convent were relegated to a secondary role, almost a "non-role," wherein they generally were appended to the family of relatives where they often served as live-in babysitters, chaperones (or "dueñas"), or as servants.

Other women who remained unmarried theoretically had open to them one of two other roles--nun or prostitute--the first considered permanent, and the other, temporary. The nun was permanently "married" to the primary male symbol as bride of Christ. The prostitute was bound to all males, with her honor presided over, not by her father, but by the "padre de la mancebía."

In considering the idea of personal choices regarding either role, it is evident that theory was not born out in practice. If the choice of vocation was to be a nun, a dowry was required, rather like an "entrance fee," the size dependent upon the particular convent. Some convents for poor women and some for reformed prostitutes were supported by charity, although they were sometimes not supported very well, judging from contemporary records which detail the convents' begging for charity to keep from starving (as cited in my Chapter 2, regarding the Heironomite Convent in Madrid, and also as noted by Dominguéz Ortiz for the Santa Maria Convent in 1597 Seville, qtd. Perry 198). So, in spite of the fact that a nun was attached to the primary phallic symbol by her "marriage" to God, practicality and economics often won out over her divine attachment, and she was rarely

accorded the highest social status within the community of mortals. In poorer orders, she was sometimes left to starve her way to a speedier entrance into heaven.<sup>18</sup>

Some women did not freely choose convent life, but were forced by family pressures into the celibate life of the cloistered nun (which caused some unhappy nuns, like Catalina de Erauso, to run away). Some women who were unable to enter a convent joined the ranks of "beatas," that is, the Beguines or lay sisters, who were not bound by permanent vows. They generally lived on charity and frequently banded together to live in groups near the town church. One apparent inconvenience of these living arrangements is documented by the occasional mention in town and Inquisition documents of sex-scandals involving the "beatas" and their local priests.

Many other women who would have chosen the convent were forced by dire necessity into the harder life of that other "nunnery," prostitution. Penniless or "fallen" noblewomen, "hidalgas," or "lucky" commoners might manage to become a more or less well-kept courtesan (like Cervantes' sister); but the poorest women had little choice but to defy the law and work on their own or with a pimp (as in Rinconete y Cortadillo), or to enter one of the legal houses of prostitution. These were regulated by the town fathers and often owned by the members of the Church hierarchy, who justified such ownership by the Church's recognition of necessary evils caused by the frailty of the human

condition. The cleric Farfan's justifies the existence of houses of prostitution in just such terms:

The brothel in the city, then, is like the stable or latrine for the house. Because just as the city keeps itself clean by providing a separate place where filth and dung are gathered, etc., so, neither less nor more, assuming the dissolution of the flesh, acts the brothel: where the filth and ugliness of the flesh are gathered like the garbage and dung of the city (Salamanca ms. qtd. in Perry 206).

So accepted was this idea of prostitution as a necessary part of a degenerate world that the work of dedicated anti-prostitution clerics and citizens was often undone by unsympathetic town officials, particularly since those officials often had a vested interest in forcing reformed women back into prostitution. Thus, as can be seen in the Escribanías de Cabildo in Seville's archives, prostitution itself was not only strictly regulated by the town fathers for health reasons, but was also regulated to keep alive a profitable enterprise which was frequently conducted in buildings rented from the town officials or the Church. Further complicating matters, the life of a prostitute was regulated not only in matters of sexual health, but also in religious matters. Prostitutes were required to attend mass, refrain from work on certain holidays, and refrain from leaving the houses of prostitution to visit or walk in other parts of the city, unless accompanied by the "padre de la mancebía" on the way to mass. In fact, the evidence of Seville's town documents suggests that as the sixteenth century wore on, town

regulations became more stringent, apparently due to the increased problems with syphilis and several attacks of plague, so that in 1620 an older ordinance was reaffirmed which required all prostitutes in Seville to wear their "mantas dobladas y no tendidas como las buenas mujeres" so that citizens could more easily avoid them if desired.<sup>19</sup> Earlier, in 1500, a royal letter to the city council of Seville mandated the wearing of a yellow hood for all prostitutes.<sup>20</sup> This use of fashion as a means of social ostracism was not new.<sup>21</sup> The same means, and even the same color, had been employed to distinguish Jews from Christians throughout the Middle Ages.

Considering the alternatives, and in spite of the disadvantages of convent life for the single women who saw their convents as a prison or as a dumping ground when their families and societies had no place for them, and the disadvantages for the women who were forced from privation in the outside world into starvation in a convent suffering under the strain of financial collapse, for some women the life of a nun was the best of all possible worlds. Some convents offered opportunities for study, contemplation, and even socializing without the burdens and danger of family responsibilities and child-bearing. Rising in the middle of the night for prayers may sound difficult at first, but women who were repeatedly pregnant and nursing one child after another were undoubtedly up at all hours in good health and poor. Although her works date from the very end



of the seventeenth-century, the Mexican nun, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in her "Response to Sor Filotea" explained the value of convent life. Unlike the houses of prostitution which rejected older "members" when they were no longer desirable enough to be economically profitable, the convent offered its more mature members possibilities for a place of authority in the Church hierarchy. "Being a nun did not mean a withdrawal from everyday life, but a means by which wealthier women could lead a useful and fulfilling existence. It was a career and livelihood for wealthier ladies who were restricted by birth from the choices open to peasant women."<sup>22</sup> Technically, God ruled by way of his emissaries: the Pope, bishops, cardinals, and priests. However, in practice, abbesses were often left to run things themselves. For some independent, ambitious, and intelligent women fortunate enough to have access to a suitable dowry, the convent must have been a "godsend."

#### Wives and Widows

Women who would not, or for lack of a dowry could not, enter a convent, might attract a suitable husband--either by their own charms and severely restricted efforts, or through the machinations of their families. Once married, women seem to have enjoyed a good bit of freedom normally denied to young maidens. Depending upon the social standing of her husband and the individual arrangements of each household,

the married woman might visit with her friends and family in her house or theirs (with noble women sometimes presiding over "salons"), go to the theater, help with charitable works for the poor, and attend mass and religious celebrations. Frequently, outings took place in the company of a family squire or other trusted male companion rather than with the woman's husband. Particularly in the upper classes, there seems to have been a good bit of separation in the activities of the married couple.

In matters of social position, both wives and widows shared in the social standing of their husbands-- with noble women who had married beneath their social class into the "villana" class being considered as "villanas" even after their husbands had died.<sup>23</sup> Wives enjoyed more freedom of movement and positions of authority within the home than unmarried young women, but widows who had economic resources to fall back on enjoyed perhaps the best position of all because they were often able to continue in their husband's business ventures and serve as the head of the family. Poor widows, as was the case with other poor women, were at the mercy of the charity of relatives, friends, or the Church.

In matters of work, wives usually shared in the occupations of their husbands. For example a woman who was interested in books, would have done well to marry a book publisher, since the possibilities for her being able to work in that field without the link of her spouse would have been almost non-existent--unless of course she had inherited

from her own family, in which case her husband would probably have participated in the negotiations of the inherited business. In the traditions of the Middle Ages, women who were admitted to trade guilds nearly always did so as wives or widows of guild members.

Economic situations for most families of the lower classes required the help of the family members for survival, leading to women who were well-trained in certain careers. This had less of a practical effect for wives wanting to make a place for themselves in the hierarchy than it did for widows. Although widows who were poor to begin with or widows who were patently unprepared to take control of the family's means of livelihood probably found themselves in a worse state of affairs after their husbands' deaths, some particularly astute women were able to manage quite well in their widowhood. As explained by María del Carmen Carlé,

En una sociedad que veía a la mujer en permanente minoridad, permanentemente necesitada de la guía y apoyo masculinos, incapaz de tomar por sí misma decisiones de cualquier índole--concepto que la práctica desmentía una y otra vez--el paso de los años apenas alteraba su situación y tan sólo la viudez le daba un cierto grado de autodeterminación.<sup>24</sup>

Given the effects of the frequently violent and more active lifestyles of the male population and the tradition of males marrying younger females, it is only to be expected that women were often widowed. In inventories taken for the disbursement of the wills following the death of the owners

of some of the farms in La Mancha in the seventeenth century, out of six households surveyed, three were headed by women. Further, from the nature of the inventories, it is evident that the women were active in farming, wool production, and sales, and that those operations were going quite well. For example, "en el caso de Doña Polonia de Manzanares es también significativo . . . tiene menos tierra y ganado que el anterior [don Felipe], pero es asimismo muy rica."<sup>25</sup> Women frequently appear in town documents recording business applications, leading to the supposition (often confirmed within the document itself) that many of these women were widows carrying on the family business. The situations for non-widowed women who successfully ran farms and businesses during their husbands' military service only to have to relinquish control after their return must have led to problems--and solutions--similar in many ways to those faced by self-sufficient American wives after World War II.

Conscious and Unconscious Rebellion in Golden Age Spain:  
Speaking Without a Voice

In spite of the fact that women had been "humanized" or taken off the Marian pedestal and out of the Garden of Eden to a much greater extent under the Humanists than in previous centuries, when the country collapsed into political and economic decline during the Counter

Reformation (creating a casualty of Humanism in the process), women not only found themselves idolized and/or vilified again in the philosophical abstract, they found, in addition, that their economic situation was also adversely affected. While struggling to survive the practical consequences of her increased subjugation, and struggling under the weight of the losses suffered in an age that turned out to be for her less than golden, woman accepted her role in the "divinely ordained" patriarchy--in a fashion--and within the confines of her so-called acceptance, managed to win some measure of freedom. Nevertheless, just as God remained head of the Church, man remained head of the family. And, as theologians were wont to point out, the head has the tongue. How was woman to speak?

Although Spanish women of the Golden Age had a difficult time making themselves heard without piquing the interest of the Inquisition, they often found ways to rebel against the silence imposed on them by their society. In Melveena McKendrick's work on Golden Age women in Spanish drama, she presented her view of the role of the everyday women:

the average Spanish woman was not . . . the sacrificial lamb she has been painted. And if she was a slave, it was to the conventions of the patriarchal society in which she lived, conventions which she, as a product of that society, believed in and upheld. She was a woman of limited education who led a life centered around her home; a life of seclusion as a girl and, as a married woman, of modest freedom within the limits set by virtue and propriety. She

imposed upon her daughters the restrictions she had at time found irksome as a girl, in the mature conviction that they were necessary and wise; but she was content to leave the affairs of men in their own hands, confident that she did not lack influence (McKendrick 39).

This description seems accurate--up to a point, but one wonders how McKendrick could determine or would even surmise that women were so "content" with their lack of a place in the hierarchy and so "confident" of any appreciable amount of influence during the backlash of Counter Reformation oppression. This statement is particularly surprising in light of the bitter and overt complaints against male dominance in the works of the writer María de Zayas in the late Golden Age and especially when considered against the sarcastic wit of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in her forementioned "Respuesta a Sor Filotea" or even her famous redondilla, which opens with the barb: "Hombres necios que acusáis a la mujer sin razón, sin saber que sois la ocasión de lo mismo que culpáis . . ." Considering that the influence of women was making an obvious downward spiral, descending finally to the new "low" of the importation of the Salic Laws by Phillip V in the eighteenth century, it would seem more logical to assume that women might not be so content. Carmen Martín Gaité in her Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España recognizes an undercurrent of discontent beginning before the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Vigil (99) cites a contemporary source documenting wifely discontent--from the early sixteenth-century writings of the

cleric Francisco de Osuna, who said that he knew of some discontented women who "riñen y gruñen y son rebeldes; no miran que les conviene ser sujetas al que les dio nuestro señor por cabeza, que es el marido." Also, Ortega Costa points out that

there are clues that indicate a widespread dissatisfaction that manifested itself in role changing [like Catalina de Erauso] . . . or in the writings of despairing young women forced into marriages they did not want or forced into convents to satisfy their parents' desires . . . Finally, though there is not yet enough information to judge accurately how much the lives of women changed with the Reformation, one thing is certain: the society in which the women . . . lived did not remain the same (Ortega Costa 110).

It would seem obvious that where there is good deal of change being effected, very often, if not always, dissatisfaction with the present system is the motivating force. But, if that is true, how could, and did, women voice their rebellion in a system that actively worked to suppress protests? As noted by Agnes Heller, "in general, we can say that--within certain degrees of tolerance--man must learn to 'use' the concrete things and custom patterns of the world into which he is born, however great their variety and their complexity."<sup>27</sup> Using "man" in the generic sense, this holds as well for "woman," and in the case of Golden Age Spain, it was just that--her ability to use the customs at her disposal to her own advantage--that allowed her to survive, to speak her own language, or borrowing from Gilligan, to speak "in a different voice."<sup>28</sup> By beating her society at its own games, woman managed to define herself and take some

charge of her own existence without the express permission or recognition of the import of her actions by that society--or sometimes even by her own conscious self.

The self images society attempted to impose, and largely succeeded in imposing upon Golden Age Spanish woman were oddly paradoxical. She both, and simultaneously, was taught that she had no sexuality ("Vives rechazaba que las mujeres tuvieran deseos eróticos, incluso con sus maridos si estaban casadas." Vigil, 67) and that she would do well to live in virtual (and virtuous) isolation because she was, by nature, a seductive, evil daughter of Eve. In fact, the paradoxical situation in which Golden Age woman found herself trapped is evident from the two major female symbols prevalent in her Catholic world--Mary, holy mother of God, and Eve, evil temptress and root of all evil. Occasionally this ambivalence can be found reflected in religious paintings---not only do some Golden Age Virgins in the Museo del Prado look decidedly non-virginal, but the reformed prostitute images of Mary Magdalene are the very symbol of ambiguity itself. Thus, woman was forced to try to conform to an ambiguous and impossible position within a society that defined her as voiceless, often honorless, and sometimes soulless. Both slut and saint, at one and the same time, she was forced not only to subordinate her desire, but to deny it altogether in favor of the male to whom she was required to be attached. Forced to hide her desire and hide



the visible results of her acceptance of her role as reproductive agent, denied the right to speak, to protest, to work, and to study, denied, in effect, the Word of God, the Logos, the Son---in fact, denied any position in the hierarchy that might be found acceptable to many---woman, to speak, was forced to create a language beyond The Word. In the struggle to be heard, woman's body became her "langue" while her symptoms and her conscious and unconscious manipulations of the forcefully imposed rules and traditions of fashion and daily life (her only world) became her "parole." Some women spoke the body, descending (or feigning descent) into madness, religious ecstasy, and hysteria. Sometimes her wordless "voice" was raised in the purposeful defiance of fashion, make-up, illicit flirtations, and complicated social codes and customs. Lacking a Sigmund Freud to define their pain and to ask what they wanted, they were often "ministered to" by the officers of the Inquisition, a force so powerful that even (and perhaps especially) loyal nuns who did not fit the prescribed social molds (nuns such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz) openly feared its grasp, and so enduring that the last executions did not take place in Spain until the late nineteenth century.

The political and social structures of Golden Age society relegated woman to a position of subjugation, similar to that of African slaves or native Americans after the Conquest. Thus, it is not surprising that Golden Age woman's manipulation of elements of her daily life in order

for her to achieve some measure of self-expression and freedom is similar to reactions common to those other subjugated groups. That is, all of those groups found ways to "get around" what was required of them, to communicate in their own tongue, to mean what was not said, and to say what was not meant. Some of the similarities between the situation of women and that of other subjugated peoples are easily identified, since these like situations resulted from the same type of power structure. For example, a typical justification for maintaining both slaves and women "in their places" (that is, the places assigned to them at birth by the political structure in power, whether the Church or Secular authority), sometimes, as in this passage from 1851, included references to their being in need of management (like children), and to their duty to conform to their situation:

If slavery is sinful because it infringes the rights of man, then any other thing is also sinful which infringes them...The law gives parents the right to govern, command, and restrain minor children; to inflict punishment for their disobedience. Is parental authority a sin? Government, in every form, is found to deprive females of a large proportion of the rights which men possess. When married, their rights are wholly absorbed in the rights of the husband...In a state of civil government, it is a mere question of expediency how personal rights shall be adjusted.<sup>29</sup>

Generally, the status of slavery, as a birth assignment, was justified as the contention of divine retribution--e.g. blacks bore the curse of Ham, just as all women were meant to suffer for the sins of Eve in the Garden

of Eden.<sup>30</sup> Slaves were forced into or prohibited from sexual-marital unions at the whim of their masters. Women, particularly noblewomen, in spite of secular and ecclesiastical laws to the contrary, were also victims of "sexual management". Convents were frequently used as virtual prisons for young girls whose possible future marriages might threaten the rest of the family's interests or for girls who might have no way of surviving financially in the outside world. And on the other side of the convent walls, many women were "persuaded," sometimes by physical torture, to make politically advantageous alliances when they would have preferred the life of a nun. And, just as slaves in the United States fled to the North, women often fled to the sanctuary of convents. Slaves resisted their oppression in their songs, their language, their attitudes to work, and the ways in which they wore their clothing. There is no reason to suppose that Spanish Women were substantially different in their modes of resistance.

One obvious response to intolerable treatment is flight. Females fleeing angry relatives are so common throughout Golden Age literature that it would be hard to doubt their very real existence in daily life. It is in fact known that in Spain's frontier days when female colonizers were in great demand, towns frequently lent protection to couples who were fleeing angry husbands or other relatives, as long as those couples agreed to stay in that town (Dillard 138-9). Further, a complaint of officials

regulating emigration to the New World was that too many passengers were slipping through without licenses. Perry cites a royal letter of 1604 that claims more than six hundred women sailed for the New World, of whom only fifty were licensed (Perry 199). In the Archives of the Indies, a glance at the ships' registries of licensed passengers documents the presence of unmarried women looking for a better life. Some women, like Catalina de Erauso, undoubtedly fled in male attire and ended up playing male roles. Probably more from necessity than choice some women who did not choose the convents fled to the brothels. And undoubtedly, faced with an intolerable marriage, some women must have fled to the haven of madness or even "accidental" suicide.

Violence is another form of resistance. Female rebellions are not unknown in Spain's history. In 1624, one rebellion of women provoked by the murder of a wife by her husband (presumably for suspicion of adultery) caused such an uproar that town officials were obliged to hang the killer immediately (Vigil 150). In other more individual reactions women have been convicted of murdering their husbands or, as in some instances, of spouse abuse (Carmen Carlé 33). There is also at least one recorded case of the stabbing of a priest by a "beata" which, in light of the Inquisition inquiries into sexual perversions and other activities among some priests and their female followers, leads to thoughts of the obvious possibility of some type of

romantic revenge on the part of the convicted woman.<sup>31</sup> Another "beata" incident indicts the Church as a cause for women to neglect their wifely duties. The forementioned Maria Cazalla (wife of Lope Rueda) was attacked by her husband for her Church activities combined with her lack of attentions to hearth and husband (Ortega Costa 95). Women who did not reject their unwanted husbands for the Church might do so for a lover (even though they risked being legally murdered by their husbands, but only if caught in the act and killed on the spot).

Less overt forms of resistance to oppression than running away or committing murder are often difficult to document. Women who had to survive in a society over which they had little or no control undoubtedly found ways to rebel within the system. For example, the admonishments to women not to squander their husbands' money and the complaints about women who did just that seem to be evidence of the quiet voicing of a good deal of dissatisfaction. Traditionally, clothing and fashions also have been used as a means of making a statement. It is fortunate that in the particular case of Golden Age female fashions and women's resistance to attempts to legally enforce changes of these fashions (a resistance which persevered for some time even under the threat of fines and imprisonment for defiance of "fashion laws"), there exist records of laws and legal proceedings, contemporary traveller's diaries, and portraits

by Golden Age artists which can be used to support theoretical suppositions of a female rebellion.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bruce W. Wardropper, "Don Quixote: Story or History?" Critical Essays on Cervantes, ed., Ruth El Saffar (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986) 89.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Elizabeth Perry, "'Lost Women' in Early Modern Seville," Feminist Studies 4.1 (February 1978): 205.

<sup>3</sup> Tirso de Molina, El amor médico, Comedias II, ed. Alonso Zamora Vicente (c.1635; Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos-Espasa-Calpe, 1956) 9. Regarding Beatriz Galindo, see especially fn 117.

<sup>4</sup> Salvador de Madariaga, Mujeres españolas (Madrid: Colección Austral-Espasa-Calpe, 1972) 91.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Pfandl, Juana la loca, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Colección Austral-Espasa-Calpe, 1938) 70-71.

<sup>6</sup> Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Efemérides, 1. McKendrick also cites this story of the "Monja Alférez," as does Perry, among many others. As noted by McKendrick (40,fn3), she tells her own story in La historia de la Monja Alférez escrita por ella misma, e ilustrada con notas y documentos por J.M. de Ferrer (Madrid, 1918)

<sup>7</sup> Andrew J. Weigert, Sociology of Everyday Life (New York: Longman, 1981) xiv.

<sup>8</sup> Agnes Heller, Everyday Life, tr. G. L. Campbell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) 186.

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, El antiguo régimen: Los Reyes Católicos y los Austrias (Madrid: Alianza, 1988) 372-375.

10 J. H. Elliott, Imperial Spain: 1469-1716, (1963; New York: Meridian-New American Library, 1977) 221-224 discusses the closing of Counter Reformation Spain.

11 Ruth Kelso, Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956) See especially her chapters on "Training," "Studies" and "Vocation" 38-135.

12 For difficulties experienced by doctors and for backward medical practices see especially: Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Escribanías de Cabildo. Siglo XVI. Sección III. Tomo 11.

13 See Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Efemérides. Cuadro 2.

14 Heath Dillard, Daughters of the Reconquest (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 12-13.

15 Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Escribanías de Cabildo, Siglo XVI, Sección III. Volume 11, Number 33.

16 Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla. Indiferentes Generales. See especially: 739,4 (9 enero 1577)/ 741,191 (4 agosto 1589)/ 741,208 (2 marzo 1590)/ 741,216 (29 marzo 1590).

17 Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla. Indiferentes Generales. See especially: 738,76 (14 mayo 1565). Letters appear intermittently from 1565 to 1590 when a letter appears from the new governor, the grandson of Aldonza Manrique, Juan Sarmiento.

18 Archivo General de Indias, Sevilla. Charcas 1, 32. 27 March and 9 May 1586. Scandals involving ramshackle nunneries filled with hungry nuns are not uncommon in Spain's history. An example found in the Charcas documents in the Archivo General de Indias reveals the ongoing problems faced by the Hieronymite nuns of the "Monasterio de la Concepción" in Madrid. It is hard to doubt the genuine concern of their prioress when she pleads in March of 1586 to be granted the office of Chancellor of the Audiencia of Charcas in order to receive the compensations tied to that title: "Es tan muy neze(c)itadas y les falta mucha hacienda para sustentarse el convento y cumplir con su obligación por

las grandes deudas que tienen y demas desto tienen un quarto que se les viene al suelo que a no remediarse el haria en mucho detrimento la guarda de la casa y se seguiria grande escandalo como otras vezes (h)an si(g)nificado a Vuestra Majestad suplicandole por alguna merced y limosna." Unfortunately, for the nuns at least, the royal response to this, as it had been to previous pleas, was "que buscasen otra cosa".

19 Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Escribanías de Cabildo. Section 4. Seventeenth Century. 22-14. Item 14.

20 Mary Elizabeth Perry, "'Lost Women' in Early Modern Seville: The Politics of Prostitution," Feminist Studies 4.1 (February, 1978): 204.

21 See Gies, Women in the Middle Ages, especially 56.

22 Carol Adams, From Workshop to Warfare (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983) 20.

23 Heath Dillard, Daughters of the Reconquest: Women In Castilian Town Society, 1100- 1300 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) For a description of the difficulties faced by widows who wished to regain their noble status after their husband's death, see 125-126.

24 María del Carmen Carlé, Grupos periféricos: las mujeres y los pobres (Buenos Aires: Ed. Gedisa, 1988) 54.

25 Jerónimo López-Salazar Pérez. Estructuras agrarias y sociedad rural en la Mancha de los siglos XVI y XVII. Unpublished thesis #11.118. Universidad Complutense. Departamento de Geografía e Historia. Madrid, 1980. See Chapter 5, including especially 497-499.

26 Carmen Martín Gaité, Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España, 2nd ed. (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1988). See especially her "Introduction," where she defines the eighteenth-century custom of "cortejo" as supposing "una importante revolución en las costumbres españolas, [que] significa la semilla de un primer conato explícito de malestar matrimonial y da lugar, por vez primera a través de las polémicas que desencadenó, a una relativa toma de conciencia--aun cuando muy minoritaria--con respecto a



posibles reivindicaciones de la mujer en la sociedad" (XVII). Obviously this "seed" must have been formed due to some earlier provocation which is supported by her earlier claim that "ningún siglo levanta paredes irremediamente aislantes entre el precedente y el posterior." And as she adds in a later chapter "pocos españoles eran capaces de conocer que les estaban devolviendo, un poco adornado, algo que, en gran parte, era genuinamente suyo y habían propagado ellos al extranjero" (16). All of which tends to lead to the conclusion that an assumption of a general "contentedness" of Golden Age women with their station in life is not in line with the evidence.

27 Agnes Heller, Everyday Life, tr. G.L. Campbell (1970; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984) 4.

28 Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982). Gilligan describes the male interpretation of the world as based on Law, Logic, and Morality whereas the female view is based on interconnected relationships and communication. Thus it would follow that in her struggle for self-definition, she would be more likely to refuse the Law and, in general, to refuse it in a way that would be least damaging to her most important relationships with others.

29 John Fletcher, Studies on Slavery, in Easy Lessons (1851; Miami, Florida: Mnemosyne Publishing Co., 1969) 203-204.

30 T. C. Thornton, An Inquiry into the History of Slavery (1841; Detroit, Michigan: Negro History Press, [1960?]) 9-10. This religious justification for slavery was well summed up in the published sermons of the Reverend T. C. Thornton, President of the Centenary College in Mississippi: "The curse pronounced upon Canaan, by the venerable Noah, was, that he should be 'a servant of servants unto his brethren,' the import of which may be, that the history of the world, should be but a record of this fact, that the sons of Ham, in the line of Canaan should, through all time, be the servants of those descended from Shem and Japeth." Then expanding upon these ideas even further, this renowned theologian commented on the position of women, or at least of some women: "It will also be seen, that there [in Australia], in many places, woman becomes the abject 'bond slave' of man, and whilst the latter by custom, which is law, is free from servitude, the former is a slave of slaves . . . To them it belongs to toil, to bear burdens, and in fine to do, abroad and at home, all that is done,

either for the preservation of life, or the sustenance and support necessary to its comfort." 9-10.

<sup>31</sup> Archivo Municipal de Sevilla. Sección Especial 11, Conde del Aguila, Tomo 20, Efemérides 1, 22 octubre de 1588.

CHAPTER 4  
CERVANTES' WOMEN

Nowhere are Cervantes' critics able to find more justification for their claims of misogyny than in the analysis of those characters which seem to fit into the traditional bipolar construct of good and evil. Further, while the literary support of negative ideals (such as witches) would appear at first to be more obviously damaging to women, the angelic heroines, by the impossibility of their perfection, are at least as suspect. As noted by many feminist researchers, the angel-monster/Mary-Eve dichotomy has persisted well into the nineteenth century, and has not been totally eradicated even today. It is not surprising then, that Cervantes should have been affected in his writing by a mode of thinking which managed to dominate Western thought for so many generations. But is a stereotypical imaging of perfect good and hopeless evil all there is to Cervantes' women?

For some critics it would seem that that is precisely the case, if indeed, the existence of the darker pole is even recognized. In his Cervantes: creador de la novela corta española, Amezúa y Mayo clearly puts Cervantes "en la legión de los escritores misóginos, enemigos de la mujer."<sup>1</sup>

Evidence of positive traits is attributed to rhetoric and a false, borrowed neo-platonic idealism. Overall, he maintains that "para Cervantes la mujer no tiene un valor capital y decisivo en la vida . . ." (Amezúa y Mayo 237), and specifically, the women of the Novelas ejemplares are described as "lindas, simpáticas y atractivas, pero que no pasan de ahí" (Amezúa y Mayo 242). But among all these beautiful, friendly, and attractive women, where is Estefanía? Where is Cariharta? Where are the prostitutes and "dueñas" and gypsies? Where are the witches? From this description, it appears that at least some of Cervantes' women in the Novelas ejemplares have been not just misread, but left unread.

If Cervantes had limited himself to following contemporary models in his beloved "novelas . . . no imitadas ni hurtadas" (NE I 52), an analysis of his female characters would have been simplified--and superfluous. However, the originality of Cervantes' tales lies not just in his use of the short novel format in the Spanish language, but also in his genius in combining the ideas and ideals of his time with his own extraordinary life experiences in order to create characters, specifically women characters, that were both acceptable to the hierarchy and at the same time a subtle subversion of that very hierarchy.

The division of the Novelas ejemplares into types, for the purposes of analysis, have generally ended with two main

categories, determined by their adherence to or distance from "the real world." For example, Murillo's "romance structure" and his "biographic structure" were labelled by their creator "idealistic" and "realistic," just as El Saffar used similar terms in Novel to Romance when developing her theories on the chronology of the novels. Helia M. Corral took her novel type-divisions in a different direction in her essay "La mujer en las Novelas ejemplares de Cervantes Saavedra," when she divided the women characters into two major types: nobles and commoners. Corral's divisions are, in fact, adequate up to a point. However, when what was most likely a catering to the reading market is interpreted as a clear authorial belief in "la fuerza o el atavismo de la sangre," her divisions fall short.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the main female characters whose novels fall into the traditional "idealistic" category are all of noble birth, and that those women are the ethereally beautiful, superior beings of typical of romance literature. However, to attach undue significance to Cervantes' use of a popular literary type while simplifying his common characters as "el reverso de la medalla, debido a que carecen casi totalmente de toda gracia física y espiritual" (Corral 398), would seem to ignore Cervantes' skills and accomplishments in creating characters that go beyond the angel-monster polarity decried by modern feminists.<sup>3</sup> In truth, Cervantes did an admirable job, not only of presenting to the reader honorable, honest, and hard-working

minor characters from the ranks of working class women (such as the innkeeper's sensible, literate wife in La ilustre fregona), but also of portraying the realities of the seamier sides of life with a good bit of compassion, understanding, and humor. Moreover, it is arguable that his witches, as well as his angelic noble heroines, might be interpreted as vehicles for making social statements that transcend the stereotype that they are thought to represent.

#### Angelic Heroines

While the majority of Cervantes' women could be described as morally good women, Isabela of La española inglesa, Costanza of La ilustre fregona, and Leonisa of El amante liberal are examples of nearly perfect Golden Age women. They are virgins, humble, beautiful, and, to the public eye, submissive. Their unblemished chastity accords to them in the terminology of L. A. Murillo "the maximum degree of idealization,"<sup>4</sup> a designation that would not have applied if they had given up their virginity for a mere promise of marriage. According to the definition of John T. Cull, "The perfect ideal woman was without free will,"<sup>5</sup> and these characters might at first appear to fit that description as well. However, using a technique not uncommon in other earlier works (in works from the pastoral genre, for example), Cervantes removed these women from their

rightful social settings, allowing them freedom from traditional constraints and problems, while presenting them with new and sometimes dangerous challenges.

In this way Cervantes presented as a fictional reality what women seeking a feminist consciousness have attempted to achieve for centuries on a very real plane--that is, to distance themselves from traditional structures in order to be able to develop free of social strictures which bound them to specific actions, careers, life-styles, etc. As stated by Lerner, "Since the locus of women's gender indoctrination has so often been the family, the social space necessary for liberating women has had to be a space outside the family."<sup>6</sup> By transporting Isabela to the intrigues, petty jealousies, and prejudices of life in the English court, Costanza to the common life of a Spanish wayside inn, and Leonisa to the hands of Moorish captors, he effectively isolated the heroines from their traditional social structures in order to allow them to develop, if not altogether freely, then with fewer constraints on the use of their own free wills.

While it might seem logical to conclude from the contemporary ideas on the upbringing of girls that Cervantes would have chosen to portray the dangers of too much freedom for young women, it is in these novels where the women have been forced from the normal confines of their stations in life that maximum virtue (and chastity) is exemplified. Thus, these heroines turn out to be, at least in one aspect,

a quiet subversion of the moralists' prescription for a proper upbringing. (Conversely, those women who became victims of human passions, are also those women who lived more conventional lives--and if they left those lives, as did Teodosia and Leocadia of Las dos doncellas, it was because flight was the only way they might find an answer to problems caused by immature or too-hasty actions).

Of the three Angelic Heroines, it is significant that only Leonisa of El amante liberal was living with her natural parents at the age when she was ready to consider marriage; and it is she, guided by her parents, who was on the brink of making a most serious error in judgment. Not only does she avert marital disaster once she is "saved" from normalcy by her capture, she then achieves her finest potential of a mature self-identity while living an unconventional life filled with trials and temptations--a developmental pattern that is paralleled, although somewhat less dramatically, in the lives of the other two displaced heroines. All three characters fare equally well in the resolutions of their respective tales, in spite of the fact that their surroundings and the problems faced by each are very different in nature. However varied the setting, each novel demonstrates the benefits of tempering passion with reason, and each heroine reveals to the reader a different aspect of one central theme--that is, the problem of the objectification of women, wherein women were treated as the



property of a dominant male and not as responsible beings in charge of their own destinies.

Costanza of La ilustre fregona is the least objectified of the three heroines of this group, and Tomás de Avendaño, her suitor, has the least difficulty bringing his suit to a successful conclusion. This novel does not begin with an immediate introduction to the "fregona" herself. Oddly enough, it does not even begin with the introduction of her future husband, but rather with that of the noble youth who is finally revealed to be her half-brother, Diego de Carriazo.

Carriazo, who had previously tasted the picaresque lifestyle--"Finalmente, él salió tan bien con el asunto de pícaro, que pudiera leer cátedra en la facultad al famoso de Alfarache" (NE II 139)--decides to flee the boredom of his parental home, along with his friend Tomás de Avendaño, in search of the excitement of the tuna harvests, "las almadrabas de Zahara." Their adventure comes to an abrupt halt when, overhearing two mule drivers outside Ilescas discussing the beauty of a dishwasher in the Sevillano Inn in Toledo, they decide to detour to that city for a glimpse of her beauty, the thought of which has provoked in Avendaño "un intenso deseo de verla" (NE II 148).

As luck would have it, when Avendaño arrives at the inn shortly after nightfall, Costanza herself meets him in the courtyard, then asks, "¿Qué buscas hermano? ¿Es por ventura criado de alguno de los huéspedes de casa?" and finally only

calls the innkeeper after chiding him for becoming too flattering. The fact that he was actually able to see and even talk to Costanza upon his arrival is remarkable in itself, and foreshadows the future success of the would-be "pícaro." For, as Avendaño later tells his friend, Costanza always retired at nightfall and refused to speak to the guests at the inn.

Of course, at that first sight of her, Avendaño becomes instantly smitten with the beautiful Costanza, who in her supposed position as a common maid would make an unsuitable match for the noble youth that he is, while he, in turn, in his disguise, would certainly be unsuitable for Costanza. Avendaño ignores the social inconveniences of their positions and concocts a believable tale to gain admittance to the inn where, otherwise, in his picaresque guise, he would surely be refused a room.

Even the narrator seems to forget this early meeting when commenting on Avendaño's second conversation with Costanza--"Estas fueron las primeras razones que Tomás dijo a Costanza y Costanza a Tomás en todo el tiempo que había que estaba en casa, que ya pasaban de veinticuatro días" (178). This (second) conversation is only made possible by Costanza's appearing with her jaw wrapped--presumably to ease the pain and swelling of a toothache. Avendaño takes advantage of the opportunity to declare his love for Costanza. Finally, following some minor problems, including a side tale involving Avendaño's companion, Diego de

Carriazo, and the appearance of the Magistrate's son (the rival for Costanza's affection), Avendaño wins Costanza's hand.

Before the marriage can take place, however, the reader has to discover that, like La gitanilla with its other Costanza (better known as Preciosa), the protagonist of La ilustre fregona is not who she seems to be, but rather a noble daughter removed at birth from the protected atmosphere of a noble upbringing. Also like La gitanilla, La ilustre fregona begins with the flavor, though not the structure, of a picaresque novel. Although one might think at first that the similarities end there, since Preciosa is generally rebellious (particularly when refusing to accept the conditions of her assigned gypsy role), while this Costanza would appear a model of passivity, that is not the case. For, however passive she may seem and however silently she may have done so, La ilustre fregona's Costanza has refused, or at least has agreed not to play, the role of kitchen maid or even the role of an innkeeper's daughter. Much like Preciosa, Costanza has chosen to save herself for better things. When courted by the magistrate's son, for example, she actively avoids any recognition of his attentions--her refusal to recognize his attentions is undoubtedly a form of resistance. Further, as noted by El Saffar, there is a similar shift in the relationships between the two sets of characters when the suitor is admitted to the presence of the lady without her either

compromising herself or encouraging open solicitation.<sup>7</sup> Costanza, although in an admittedly more passive way, is thus more like Preciosa than one might think and subsequently it can be argued that an appearance of passivity can effectively mask a good bit of active rebellion.

In light of characters such as Isabela Castrucha (Persiles III, capítulo XX, 253-257), who resists an unwanted arranged marriage by feigning madness, it seems evident that Cervantes recognized the existence of both covert and overt forms of resistance, forms such as those outlined by Hester in her essay on witches:

The social and ideological structures and institutions of male supremacy act to constrain women's behaviour. But women are not passive. On the contrary . . . women resist or fight back against their oppression and oppressors by using a number of strategies, including reacting against, joining in, letting it pass, and avoiding it.<sup>8</sup>

One might assume that if Cervantes did understand the variety of passive resistance skills used by women (and other oppressed groups--such as Christian captives in Arab prisons), then this knowledge would be reflected in his exemplary novels. In fact, it is in this novel, La ilustre fregona, perhaps more than in any other, where Cervantes reveals his awareness of Golden Age woman's resistance to patriarchy's rules, particularly patriarchy's injunction to silence. Yet, without a doubt, this novel also has one of the most obedient and outwardly submissive heroines.

The explanation of this apparent anomaly may be

explained, at least in part, by Cervantes' obvious knowledge of earlier literary texts (specifically the Celestina), and by his apparent understanding of Golden Age "double talk" and hidden sexual references. In his article on intertextual influence in the body of Cervantes' works, Javier Herrero has asked "Did Cervantes feel Calixto's toothache?"<sup>9</sup> and I would add that the key to Costanza's character might be found in the answer to the question "Had Costanza heard Melibea's prayer?" Herrero makes an excellent case for the claim that, not only was Cervantes an admitted admirer of the Celestina (as noted also in my Chapter 2), but he was also well aware of the metaphorical connection between a "toothache," and sexual desire, and further, that he had shown himself to be quite comfortable with spurious themes and sexual innuendos in his Entremeses. Thus, if Herrero is correct--and given the historical evidence and the evidence of the cited Cervantine texts, it would seem that he is--the "passive" Costanza's seemingly innocent "toothache" suddenly becomes an active play for Avendaño's attentions.

Since Avendaño had little opportunity to approach her in any other acceptable context--"Pero como ella andaba siempre sobre los estribos de su honestidad y recato, a ninguno daba lugar de miralla, cuanto más de ponerse a pláticas con ella"--the obvious emphasis that Costanza herself gives to her "toothache" would support this: "Mas habiendo salido aquel día Costanza con una toca ceñida por las mejillas y dicho a quien se lo preguntó que por qué se

la había puesta que tenía un gran dolor de muelas. . ." (NE II 177). Why else would the normally reticent, almost reclusive, Costanza make a show of wrapping her jaw and then appearing in public, if such actions were not a form of advertising and an active solicitation of questions (which would then require public explanations and acceptance of sympathetic consolations). The only logical answer is that she would not have done anything of the kind; but Costanza, like other women in life and literature, knew how to "speak" with a "toothache," just as other characters were shown communicating with an illness or with the clothing and make-up they wore.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to note that in Rojas' masterpiece, which ends in tragedy, Melibea offers rather than solicits the curative prayer, and the prayer that she offers is neither an overt declaration of romantic interest, nor a truly innocent prayer, but rather a counter play in Calixto's and Celestina's game. In Costanza's case, if it is true that her role is more active than it would seem at first, then she is the game-playing soliciting party (which would have been a socially permissible way for her to have tried to attract attention). However, the answer given by Avendaño is not an indirect counter-play in a game, or any double-talking prayer, but rather an honest and straightforward answer to the real question--an answer which shocks her with its honesty: "se pudiera juzgar que el sobresalto de haber visto en el papel de Tomás otra cosa tan

lejos de la que pensaba había acrecentado su belleza." (NE II 178).

In spite of Avendaño's open declaration of love and his proposal of marriage, Costanza does not report him to her guardians--a fact which might be interpreted as tacit approval of his advances. When they meet again six days later, rather than avoiding contact with him, she speaks first, although still in the veiled language of prayers and toothaches. But this time her eyes say more than her words--"pero que estas razones las dijo sin mostrar ira en los ojos ni otro desabrimiento que pudiera dar inicio de reguridad alguna" (184). Finally, Avendaño's resistance to allowing Costanza to play a role in a game for sexual favors, his insistence on remaining faithful to the real questions, and his refusal to treat her as anything other than a sensible, intelligent, future mate in charge of her own destiny is rewarded. The message is clear that patience, discretion, honesty, and a real intention to marry rather than to deceive and seduce, made all the difference in the world for these two characters who end up, not as victims of their own runaway desires, but as the perfect happily-ever-after couple.

Isabela and Ricaredo of La española inglesa also end up happily wed, but from the beginning, the love that blossoms between them is beset by problems, the least of which being that she was Spanish and he was English. Almost all of her difficulties stem from the fact that, from the very

beginning of her tale to the point where she is returned to Spain, she is treated, at least part of the time, as an object, or a political and social pawn, by everyone save her parents. In addition to the usual and unremarkable term "prenda," Isabela is referred to by members of her English family and by her newfound protector, Queen Elizabeth, as "esclava," "prisionera," "tesoro," and "premio." Even Ricaredo persists in calling her a "joya" to be given to him in payment for his service to Queen Elizabeth--"que con una joya sola que se me dé quedaré en deuda de otras diez naves"--a statement which causes him to be soundly rebuffed by the queen, who informs him that--"no la pudiérades pagar ni con lo que trae esa nave ni con lo que queda en las Indias" (NE I, 260). Although Isabela is never treated with physical cruelty by anyone other than a jealous suitor's mother, who tries to kill her with poison, she is rarely treated as anything more than a pretty plaything or a pawn in the lives of others.

The novel opens with Isabela as a child of seven being stolen from her parents in Cadiz as part of the "spoils" of battle. The ship's captain who steals her does so simply because he sees her not as a child who is being kidnapped, but rather as a souvenir of his travels, a beautiful gift to take home as a present to his wife:

Entre los despojos que los ingleses llevaron de la ciudad de Cádiz, Clotaldo, un caballero inglés, capitán de una escuadra de navíos, llevó a Londres una niña de edad de siete años, poco más o menos, y esto contra la voluntad y sabiduría del conde de



Leste . . . mas ningunas penas ni temores fueron bastantes a que Clotaldo la obedeciese, que la tenía escondida en su nave, aficionado, aunque cristianamente, a la incomparable hermosura de Isabel, que así se llamaba la niña . . . Finalmente, . . . Clotaldo . . . llegó a Londres y entregó por riquísimo despojo a su mujer a la hermosa niña. (NE I 243-4)

Isabela is given all of the material advantages that would have been given to a daughter by her "adoptive" parents, but the fact of her abduction is never forgotten--even by Clotaldo's son, Ricaredo, who, entranced at first by her beauty and virtue, ends by feeling "ardentísimos deseos de gozarla y de poseerla; no porque aspirase a esto por otros medios que por los de ser su esposo". The problems that move the plot from one snag to another begin when Ricaredo delays in asking for the hand of "una esclava" when marriage has already been promised to "una señora." When his love-sickness causes him to near death, he confesses the cause of his malady and his parents agree to his marriage to Isabela. However, throughout the trouble-ridden course of their engagement, it is always obvious that Isabela is only chosen for their son to keep him alive and because they want what they feel would supply him with the best "catch" for a wife--i.e., a woman of extreme beauty and virtue. Queen Elizabeth, who also values Isabela for her beauty, and who uses Isabela as a pawn to teach a lesson to Ricaredo's family for their insubordination in arranging their son's marriage without her permission, at least treats Isabela with some concern. Ricaredo's parents, however, show little

regard for Isabela's feelings and secretly rearrange a marriage to the original "señora" after Isabela is poisoned and becomes a physically ugly inconvenience:

En este tiempo los padres de Ricaredo, pareciéndoles no ser posible que Isabela en sí volviese, determinaron enviar por la doncella de Escocia con quien primero que con Isabela tenía concertado de casar a Ricaredo, y esto sin que él lo supiese, no dudando que la hermosura presente de la nueva esposa hiciese olvidar a su hijo la ya pasada de Isabela, a la cual pensaban enviar a España con sus padres . . . (NE I, 270).

Oddly enough, the lady-in-waiting who poisons Isabela did her an unplanned favor. By ruining her as an object of physical beauty, she has allowed her the opportunity to be valued only for her inner beauty. Ricaredo, no longer blinded by the outer shell, realizes that he loves Isabela for what she is as a person. With that truth revealed, he then arranges his own secret engagement in the presence of Isabela's parents, just before they are packed off to Spain with their formerly beautiful daughter (who has now become a handicap in the English court). In spite of his parents' plans for him, Ricaredo promises to join Isabela and her family in Seville within two years. However, as the two years near a close, Isabela is sent a heartless letter from Ricaredo's mother wherein she not only relates what she believes to be an accurate report of her son's death, but where she also finds it necessary to mention the "wife" he left behind in England. Upon receipt of the letter, Isabela plans to carry out a rebellion of her own, fighting back

against the injustices of life and society in one of the few ways acceptable:

Acabada de leer la carta, sin derramar lágrimas ni dar señales de doloroso sentimiento, con sesgo rostro y al parecer con sosegado pecho, se levantó de un estrado donde estaba sentada y se entró en un oratorio, y hincándose de rodillas ante la imagen de un devoto crucifijo hizo voto de ser monja, pues lo podía ser teniéndose por viuda (NE I 276).

Other than amending her plans to follow the wise advice of her parents that she wait for the end of the agreed two-year period, when faced with the loss of her husband-to-be, Isabela refuses all other choices that anyone else might make for her by planning to enter a convent, just as Leonora of El celoso extremeño did after the death of her husband and her uncompleted seduction by her lover. The plans, in Isabela's case, are never realized, of course, since Ricaredo appears at the crucial moment to claim her as his wife (a valid claim based on a "casamiento de palabra").

Auristela (of the Persiles), who suffered similar trials in her romance with Periandro (even losing her beauty after being poisoned by a jealous woman), also chose the convent, at least temporarily. However, both Isabela and Leonora are very unlike Auristela in that Auristela inexplicably chose the convent when her difficulties seemed to be ending, and not when confronting the possibility of life without Periandro. Whereas both Isabela's and Leonora's decisions can be seen as mature, well-reasoned reactions, or sensible decisions to wrest control from other conflicting forces in their lives, Auristela's "decision" seems to be

little more than immature, fickle indecisiveness-- particularly since she reversed the decision again. Perhaps it is this very lack of evidence that, for Auristela, entering the convent was any form of mature choice or conscious resistance which makes this novel less attractive to many modern readers.

Leonisa of El amante liberal suffers more than any of the angelic heroines from her lack of maturity. Captured by a Turkish raiding party, she is saved from what one assumes would have been a disastrous marriage to Cornelio, a man who is described by Cornelio's rival, Ricardo, as a "mancebo galán, atildado, de blandas manos y rizos cabellos, de voz meliflua y de amorosas palabras, y finalmente, todo hecho de ámbar y de alfeñique, guarnecido de telas y adornado de brocados" (NE I 143). When challenged by Ricardo, Cornelio remains seated on the grass and runs away as soon as his friends have come to his defense, thus bearing out Ricardo's claim that he won't defend himself and risk rumpling "la afeitada compostura" (NE I 144) of his outfit.

The time and distance from traditional social structures that is needed for Leonisa to mature, to recognize the folly of attaching herself to such a dandy, and to realize her full potential as a responsible Christian woman possessed of her own free will is needed even more by Ricardo, whose apparent view of the female sex fits a current feminist definition of the objectification of women: i.e., "the reduction of women to passive heterosexual

objects compliant to male needs" (Hester 11). In no other novel is such overt emphasis given to the negative effects of the treatment of women as objects, specifically by men; and never does the emphasis bear so heavily in the woman's favor.

El amante liberal opens, not with Leonisa, but with Ricardo in the recently fallen Christian city of Nicosia in Cyprus where he is reliving for his renegade friend, Mahamut, the events that led to his and Leonisa's capture by the Turks. The reader learns that Ricardo temporarily lost control of his senses because, having seen Leonisa's attentions to Cornelio, he felt that he was being deprived of something which should rightfully have been his, that is, Leonisa herself. Of course, Ricardo's view of Leonisa as a thing to be possessed is the central problem of the novel, which must be resolved before he can be worthy of her hand. The commotion caused by Ricardo's confrontation of Cornelio causes Leonisa to faint and permits the band of marauding Turks to land almost unnoticed by the distracted crowd. While Ricardo stays to help Leonisa, killing four Turks in her defense, the other townsmen flee, leaving Ricardo and Leonisa to be captured. The experiences of the two characters (who are immediately separated and put onto different vessels, then finally reunited in captivity when Leonisa, having descended to the lowest state of objectification, is offered for sale to the highest bidder),

are the necessary trials that must be surpassed before they are worthy to wed.

Although Ricardo eventually changes and wins Leonisa's hand, he sees her as an object to be possessed and/or relinquished to another man at his whim, almost to the very end of the novel when he tries to "give" Leonisa to Cornelio after their rescue. Then suddenly, at last, he comes to the realization that he can give away his worldly goods but that he cannot relinquish ownership of something that he cannot own:

Yo señores, con el deseo que tengo de hacer bien, no he mirado lo que he dicho, porque no es posible que nadie pueda demostrarse liberal de lo ajeno: ¿qué jurisdicción tengo yo en Leonisa para darla a otro? O ¿cómo puedo ofrecer lo que está tan lejos de ser mío? Leonisa es suya, y tan suya, que, a faltarle sus padres, que felices años vivan, ningún opósito tuviera a su voluntad . . . a así de lo dicho me desdigo, y no doy a Cornelio nada, pues no puedo . . . (NE I 186)

Fittingly, he had to suffer his own objectification not only by the Turks who bought and sold Christians without regard to gender, but also by Leonisa herself, in order for his eyes to be finally cleared by that very objectification.

In a complete reversal of the male-female roles, Leonisa takes advantage of her assignment to procure Ricardo's favor for her mistress, Halima, not only in order to ask Ricardo to behave as women in general had always been expected to behave, but as she herself had been expected to behave by and for Ricardo himself. That is, after having been expected by Ricardo to favor his devoted attentions to

her, regardless of whether or not she loved him, all for the simple reason that he loved her, desired her, and had judged himself to be the one most worthy of her hand in marriage, Leonisa asks the same favor of Ricardo in his relationship with Halima, suggesting that he feign love for her, if he did not feel it.

Although this segment of the novel has been interpreted as proof of Leonisa's lack of love for Ricardo at this point in the novel, and as a rather confused interaction between character/narrator/novelist (see especially Rodríguez-Luis 17-20), it would seem more likely that this is, more than anything else, a necessary step towards Ricardo's awakening and understanding of Leonisa's role (and by extension, the woman's role) in love and marriage. Nowhere is the hapless role of woman described more accurately than in this passage, which mentions Ricardo's obligations to Halima as a woman who has declared her love:

Halima, nuestra ama, creo que nos escucha, la cual me ha dicho que te adora; hame puesto por intercesora de su deseo. Si a él quisieras corresponder, aprovecharte ha más para el cuerpo que para el alma; y cuando no quieras, es forzoso que lo finjas, siquiera porque yo te lo ruego y por lo que merecen deseos de mujer declarados (NE I 169-70).

Ricardo, in a sense, must "become" Leonisa, or like Leonisa, in order to know her as a person and not just as an object. When, finally, he ends by seeing Leonisa as an independent, equal being with her own free will, he becomes worthy to be her husband.

For her part, Leonisa, who excuses her attentions to

Cornelio as having been "guiado por la voluntad y orden" of her parents, comes to realize that her parents' favored choice of a husband for her would have been a mistake, and that it is ultimately her responsibility to choose a mate who will treat her lovingly, as a valued equal, and not as a material conquest. She asks only for the permission and confirmation of her choice from her parents (to have done otherwise would have been unthinkable for the Golden Age reading public):

Esto digo por darte a entender, Ricardo, que siempre fui mía, sin estar sujeta a otro que a mis padres, a quien ahora humildemente, como es razón, suplico que me den licencia y libertad para disponer de la que tu mucha valentía y liberalidad me ha dado (NE I, 187).<sup>11</sup>

With the final acceptance of responsibility and autonomy by both, the way is paved for the perfect, long-lasting union, blessed by numerous children.

### Proto-Feminists

Although attaching the term "feminist" to a seventeenth century male-created fictional character might seem controversial by today's standards of feminism, I believe that it is justifiable when one stops to consider that feminisms and feminist ideas did not emerge full-blown from at one moment in time, but rather developed gradually. Although many of Cervantes' women carry a bit of a feminist spark, the one character of the Novelas ejemplares whose



feminist traits outweigh her other characteristics by far is Preciosa of La gitaniilla. It is not without reason that Avalor-Arce has said that this one Cervantine character "se nos aparece como la más cautivadora y lograda de sus creaciones femeninas."<sup>12</sup>

Considering the sympathy evident in the rest of the narration, this tale opens with an oddly bitter description of the absolute depravity of gypsy life:

Parece que los gitanos y gitanas solamente nacieron en el mundo para ser ladrones: crianse con ladrones, estudian para ladrones, y, finalmente, salen con ser ladrones corrientes y molientes a todo ruedo, y la gana del hurtar y el hurtar son en ellos como accidentes inseparables, que no se quitan sino con la muerte (NE I 61).

This description is followed by the provocative introduction of the principal character, the little gypsy Preciosa, a girl of fifteen who was taught from childhood "todas sus gitanerías, y modos de embelecocos y trazas de hurtar" by the old gypsy crone who is raising her "en nombre de nieta suya" (NE I 61). Of course with such an introduction--an apprenticeship for a life of crime, uncertain parentage, and a life of wandering--the reader might easily expect the novella to be heading toward a picaresque adventure. However, with the next lines, the narrator throws the reader off guard with an obvious non sequitur detailing the "results" of Preciosa's crime-oriented upbringing:

salió la tal Preciosa la más única bailadora que se hallaba en todo el gitanismo, y la más hermosa y discreta que pudiera hallarse, no entre los gitanos, sino entre cuantas hermosas y discretas pudiera pregonar la fama (NE I 61).

As if in explanation of this illogical jump from crime to dancing, the narrator then notes that "la crianza tosca en que se criaba no descubría en ella sino ser nacida de mayores prendas que de gitana" (NE I 62). How Preciosa's character was able to blossom in an atmosphere which, as later described by the old gypsy leader, proves to be one of extreme denigration of the female, where women were to be handed over like cattle, discarded in old age, and murdered for supposed infidelities "como si fueran animales nocivos" (NE I 101), is an anomaly which Cervantes chose to ignore. We are expected to believe that Preciosa's unique spirit translated these "mayores prendas" into an independence, a self-confidence, and a self identity so strong that this little gypsy can be seen as a feminist proto-type. Her warning to Juan of what he could expect if he decided to enter into a relationship with her contains an accurate self-portrait: "tengo un cierto espiritillo fantástico . . . a mí ni me muevan promesas, ni me desmoronan dádivas, ni me inclinan sumisiones, ni me espantan finezas enamoradas" (NE I 85)--and all of this even in light of the fact of, or perhaps because of, the lack of a father's name. In fact, there is nothing left but to suppose that Cervantes was only able to create such a character when that character was placed outside the bounds of acceptable society and outside the bounds of parental ties and obligations, specifically ties to the male head of family, and the male legal hierarchy. This supposition is supported by the evidence

that once the question of her birth is resolved, her self assurance and self identity evaporate along with the answered questions themselves. Note that when Juan first declares his love, Preciosa immediately begs license of the old gypsy grandmother "para responder a este tan enamorado señor" (NE I 84), but once in her father's house, the narrator reports that, "ella, con vergüenza y con los ojos en el suelo . . . ya había dicho que no tenía otra voluntad que aquello que ellos quisiesen" (NE I 131).

Had Preciosa been written into the social context of Madrid's nobility, not only would her character have lacked verisimilitude, but Cervantes would have jeopardized the popular success of his work and risked the wrath of the censors. In Preciosa's case, gaining a name and an acceptable social position and role in "normal" society constituted a loss of self, a loss of voice, and a loss of active control over her own destiny, as symbolized by this immediate subjugation to her "new" father, followed by the subsequent marriage ceremony with its symbolic transferring of the authority over her to the newly restored noble, Juan de Cárcamo (the former Andrés Caballero). Whereas Preciosa, the gypsy, had adamantly refused even to consider playing a role in the traditional barter and exchange system (although taking care, when necessary to the believability of the text, to make a clear distinction between body and soul), the new Costanza submits with barely a whimper.

The great irony of the La gitanilla is that those

traits that had made Preciosa so precious, to Juan and everyone else, are the very ones that must be relinquished before she could enter into proper society and be considered a suitable match for the man who had fallen in love with her as a free-roving and agile-tongued gypsy. The narrator assures us that "Todo cuanto Preciosa decía, y toda la discreción que mostraba, era añadir leña al fuego que ardía en el pecho del enamorado caballero" (NE I 87). Moreover, her refusal to be swayed in her good judgment, or to give up any of her freedom in any alliance with a man, in spite of her being "given" to him by the gypsy leader (NE I 103), made her all the more attractive for her confidence, determination, and unattainability. Clemente, Juan's poet rival (or at least the one who is suspected by Juan to be a rival), listed Preciosa's charms in his verses:

--Gitanica, que de hermosa  
te pueden dar parabienes:  
por lo que de piedra tienes  
te llama el mundo "Preciosa".

Desta verdad me asegura esto,  
como en ti verás;  
que no se apartan jamás  
la esquivéza y la hermosura (74).

Cold and hard as a rock or precious as a jewel, both added to her attraction in the eyes of the men who sought to melt her resolve and gain control over such a beauty.

Melvena McKendrick, in her Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age, explored the type of the "mujer esquiva" in drama.<sup>13</sup> However, were her category to be extended to include prose fiction, it is doubtful that

Preciosa would be counted. While not ready to leap into marriage, "esquivez" is certainly not her most salient trait. She merely wants to avoid any marriage that might impinge upon her right to act as a free individual. Unlike McKendrick's "mujeres esquivas," who don't want to give up their unnatural freedom to marry (a refusal represented as against the natural order of life wherein females occupy a subservient position), and who are finally shown the error of their ways and convinced to accept their divinely ordained role, Preciosa is able to arrange her own future so satisfactorily only because she does act in total freedom. And the freedom she enjoys, she uses to arrange a suitable marriage, not to avoid it.

In fact, although Preciosa assures Juan (before he assumes his identity as Andrés Caballero, the gypsy) that she will always be possessed of "libertad desenfadada" and will not permit that her liberty be affected by "la pesadumbre de los celos" (NE I 83), she does not under any circumstance discourage the possibility of marriage itself.

The terms that Preciosa sets for Juan to meet before she will consent to marry him are quite rational and probably the best that could be envisioned for her to secure a good future with a mate who would not treat her as an inferior or condemn her to live by male-imposed rules rather than her own good sense and integrity as a free individual. Although Juan agrees to her terms, including a two-year trial engagement following verification of Juan's financial

and social status, Preciosa is careful to leave the door open for him to change his mind. She makes it clear that if his love for her should waver, she has no need of him. Even when the gypsy leader offers her to Juan, she reminds him, "Estos señores bien pueden entregarte mi cuerpo; pero no mi alma, que es libre y nació libre, y ha de ser libre en tanto que yo quisiere" (NE I 103).

This freedom, this independence from any need or pre-ordained requirement for male companionship, support, or domination is what makes Preciosa special. Even after she begins to admit to her growing feelings for the new "gypsy" Juan (now Andrés), Preciosa remains in control of her own feelings and her own destiny. It is not until her "re-birth" as Costanza that her independence and spirit are in question and even that concession to traditional values is not enough to annul the libertarian message of the preceding text.

In spite of his adherence to traditional values and the care exercised in not portraying a willful noble daughter, and in spite of the traditional "happily-ever-after" marriage ending set within the context of accepted noble society, Cervantes does not denigrate the eccentric character or the unconventional life of the gypsy Preciosa. On the contrary, she is portrayed as a model of virtue and beauty--literate, discreet, god-fearing, intelligent, hardworking, honest, talented, and self-employed.

This last trait is an interesting aspect of Preciosa's character. As a working woman, Preciosa accepts money and

goods for her services and wit much like the court jester she claims not to resemble (NE I 82). However, in her gypsy persona, she flatly refuses her role in the traditional schema of barter and exchange of women. And although she sees money as an important factor in a love relationship--"la pobreza es muy enemiga del amor" (NE I 76)--she does not allow herself to be employed as a unit of exchange. This relationship between Preciosa and commerce is another subversion of tradition. She is a successful participant in the masculine role of earning and managing goods and money, but a rebellious non-participant in the feminine role of "being" the goods. Yet all of this is portrayed for the reader in a positive light, as normal and within the demands of Nature, if not entirely traditional.

Whenever the possibilities for negative traits exist, they are carefully explained away, as in the case of Preciosa's childhood when, having been taught to steal, she learned to dance. Thus, it seems that the narrator was guiding the reader toward the conclusion that while living as a gypsy, Preciosa did not participate in the illegal activities seen as typical of gypsies. Her fortune-telling, an activity which was considered heresy and reason enough to have sent real-life women to the stake (as noted in Chapter 2), was explained by Preciosa herself as a trick based on no more than common sense and wit, but completely devoid of magic.

Her only other possible flaw is her intelligence

itself. As warned by her gypsy grandmother, "no hables más, que has hablado mucho, y sabes más de lo que yo te he enseñado. No te asotiles tanto, que te despuntarás (NE I 82) which might be interpreted to mean that she would make herself stand out too much in the eyes of others. Although this type of warning is voiced only by the gypsy "grandmother", if it is true that this character functions as a sort of perversion of the typical fairy godmother, as suggested by Murillo, it may then be supposed that in having her comply with her formulaic role of protecting Preciosa from society's evils, Cervantes was using her in fact to make a veiled reference to the very real and recognizable fear felt by his contemporaries when confronted with the Inquisition's record of investigating intelligent women who knew and spoke too much (as mentioned above in Chapter 3).<sup>14</sup>

Not only did Preciosa speak as learnedly as "un colegial de Salamanca" (NE I 87), she also used logic and reason to manage her heart. In no instance did she allow Juan's desire for her to cloud her judgment, nor did she allow her own eventual attraction to him to sway her in her set program. She maintained control of her own future and that future did not include her being a subservient wife. If it is true that the "mujer esquivá' . . . more than any other female type, illustrates the exact nature of the seventeenth-century attitude to women (McKendrick 142)," then Cervantes' refusal to bow to that attitude in his creation of Preciosa and her type may represent, more than



any of his other characters, his own non-conformist attitude toward women.

Preciosa is not the only one of Cervantes' characters who stands out as a feminist prototype and who takes control of her own life. None of Cervantes' other women can surpass the shepherdess, from the Marcela and Grisóstomo episode of the Quijote, for her unwavering independence and feminism. Marcela preceded Preciosa in her declaration, "Yo nací libre" (DQ I, XIV, 185). Both Marcela and Preciosa were beautiful in the extreme and had, of course, attracted suitors. Marcela, unlike Preciosa, rejected her suitor entirely, rather than setting her own terms of courtship and requirements for marriage. However, whereas Marcela, whose aloofness never wavered, exercised her right to choose no mate, Preciosa exercised her right to choose her own mate when she was ready and under her own conditions. Marcela, remaining detached from romantic interests, rejected not only the choices others made for her, but also the possibility of the election of any mate by any process. Preciosa merely rejected any mate not of her own time and choosing.

Marcela's character did not uncover a previously hidden identity, thus remaining constant, while Preciosa, once her true identity had been revealed, assumed, along with her new name, the rather incongruous role of dutiful daughter. Marcela remained a social outcast, while Preciosa, as reward for her meek acceptance, finally obtained what she had

already set out for herself. However, this victory was not won without cost. As Preciosa, the little gypsy, she was witty, mischievous, charming, self-confident, demanding, always in control, and at times, a bit brash. As Costanza, she suddenly becomes humble, obedient, self-effacing and quiet. Gaining a name and a social standing, she lost that self-identity which was permissible for a lowly gypsy, but not for a noble daughter; and she became, at least for the sake of appearances, no more than an appendage of her father's house--the only identity acceptable for her new position.

By the time of the writing of the Persiles, feminism is barely perceptible in the character of Isabela, the maiden who subverted her uncle's marriage plans for her by feigning insanity. Her choice of mate, her controlling of her own future, was not defended with logic and reason. Rather, she was forced to speak another language--what comes to be regarded in later centuries as a peculiarly female language, the babbling language of the hysteric or the madwoman.

This segment of the Persiles, especially when compared to earlier works, provides possibly the best evidence extant in Cervantes' texts to support Hester's claim of a general move away from a view of woman as strong and threatening toward a view of woman as subservient hysteric.<sup>15</sup> As explained by Michel Foucault, "the prestige of patriarchy is revived around madness."<sup>16</sup> Not only was Isabela's feigned madness immediately believable to her uncle and others at

the inn, indicating that it was recognizable in the context of contemporary reality, but the voice of madness seems to have been the only logical choice for communication with the audience at the inn. In their The Madwoman in the Attic, Gilbert and Gubar described the process of women's writing as producing

literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards.<sup>17</sup>

In a sense, Isabela is a fictional author of her own "text," and Cervantes apparently understood the mechanics of the writing process described by these modern feminists as part of the sphere of literary creation by women, well enough to produce a character, an "author," whose own life text was also palimpsestic, who managed to conform to societal expectations of believable behavior while subverting the patriarchy. Left to cope within her own social context (as women writers are left to cope in a male-dominated field), as opposed to both Preciosa and Marcela who were both removed from their realities, she resorted to the only defense open to her. Unlike Preciosa, who appeared to be completely incapacitated when she found herself within the bounds of proper noble society, and unlike Marcela, who simply continued her open defiance of her rich father to wander in the idyllic pastoral world, for Isabela neither silence nor defiance was a viable option. She was forced to

find, and did in fact find, a way to subvert the master discourse from within, by playing the master's game better than the master himself. Of course the male who was bested by her in the game of her own destiny died after the truth of her successful subterfuge came to light. Preciosa did not have to face such an unhappy occurrence when, as the noble daughter Costanza, she finally achieved what she desired, since her battle was won with socially acceptable silence and obedience rather than direct defiance or trickery.

Preciosa seemed to be only able to act on her own when she was outside the bounds of traditional society. Once restored to her "rightful" position as daughter of a noble family, she was unable to even request the perfect union that she had so actively arranged for herself as a gypsy. As part of "normal" upper-class society, she had apparently lost her voice, her vitality, and her role as an active, desiring free agent. Taking note of her silence, her newly discovered mother began to serve as her interpreter. Unlike the shepherdess, Marcela, who was unbound by any love beyond herself and who had nothing to lose by speaking, and unlike Isabela, who was never removed from her own social context and who had never had a rational voice and thus was forced to resort to the only speech open to her which fit into the male understanding of the female voice, Costanza, who had everything to lose by speaking, who never had learned in her

life as a gypsy the language of hysteria, used silence as her only possible means of obtaining the desired end.

L. J. Woodward has interpreted La gitanilla as an example created by Cervantes to demonstrate the functioning of Thomistic Right Reasoning; and he sees the final silence of Costanza, the noble daughter, as a calculated exercise in humility.<sup>18</sup> While the Right Reasoning theory appears to have its merits, the most credible portion of Woodward's essay is the claim that the character switch to silence was not necessarily out of character (or uncalculated) when considered within the given parameters of the text. That is, it seems reasonable to suppose that a character who has consistently shown herself to be calculating, manipulative, intuitive, and exceedingly clever would certainly know when it would be in her best interests to remain silent. There is evidence to support this throughout the text. Preciosa's explanation of her fortune-telling abilities (or tricks) is one prime example. And, perhaps a little less obvious, but no less significant, is the linguistic awareness (or "conscientious performance") stressed by the narrator when it is noted that Preciosa "como gitana, hablaba ceceoso, y esto es artificio en ellas que no naturaleza" (NE I 72).<sup>19</sup> It is obvious that Preciosa was generally aware of what to say, how and when to say it, and apparently also when to say nothing at all.

The one point on which she requested help--saving Juan's life, was in effect punished by the cruel combination

marriage-execution scene staged by her newly found father, wherein Juan was told he would be allowed to marry Costanza--just before his execution for murder. Once Costanza's absolute submission to her father was confirmed, she was allowed to have what she desired, but even then it seems that it was only allowed because Juan was a more than suitable social match for the Corregidor's family. By staging this farce, Costanza's father was not only asserting his authority over his own domain and assuring himself that Costanza would meekly and unquestioningly assume her new role, he was also, as representative of the dominant patriarchy, and in the stead of Juan's own absent father, punishing Juan for his impertinence in daring to aspire to a forbidden alliance with the one whom all believed to be a lowly gypsy--however beautiful, charming, and honest she may have been.

Perhaps by way of the contrast between Preciosa, the gypsy, and Costanza, the noble daughter, Cervantes, consciously or unconsciously, was highlighting a problem of his society. As a marginal member of society, as a member of the lower classes with freedom of movement and action, Preciosa had vitality, interest, and a full and purposeful existence, yet above all she remained virtuous. As the rich Costanza, she was transformed, at least in appearance, to a nearly opinionless, self-effacing, one-sided, empty façade of her former self who could only work for herself by denying herself, by silencing her own voice. Preciosa was

truly precious, whereas Costanza was merely loyally, obediently, boringly, properly constant. That Cervantes ended this tale in a traditional way, within the norms of accepted Golden Age tradition, does not bely the fact, in truth, it serves rather to emphasize the fact, that the two protagonists, Andrés-Juan and Preciosa-Costanza, both rebels in all senses of the word, got what they wanted through their own actions, in the freedom of the gypsy world. Rather than falling into tragedy and disgrace, Preciosa, through her own intelligence, good sense, and sober cognizance and manipulation of her own and another's desire, achieved the possibility of a prosperous and happy future life.

#### Victims of Desire

All of the characters of this group come close to being perfect, Angelic Heroines--but miss through small flaws. Five of the major female characters from four of the Novelas ejemplares (Leocadia from La fuerza de la sangre, Teodosia and Leocadia from Las dos doncellas, Cornelia from La senora Cornelia, and Leonora from El celoso extremeño) fall into this category, which is comprised of characters who suffer misfortunes caused by misdirected or uncontrolled human passions. The resultant situations--all involving either the actual consummation of a sexual encounter or the intent to do so, require that the heroines' "purity" be redeemed by marriage or, in the case of the widowed Leonora

in El celoso extremeño, by dedication to Christ in a marriage to the Church. While none of the characters is totally to blame for her misfortune, each contributes in some way, to her own problems, although in one of the novels, El celoso extremeño, the heroine's guilt appears to have been intentionally minimized in the later published version of 1613 (in contrast with the earlier Porras manuscript), and in another, La fuerza de la sangre, the female protagonist's "guilt" is questionable by modern standards and subject to multiple interpretations even when considered in the light of traditional Golden Age ideas. Without exception, and true to Cervantes' "Humanist vision," all of these novels make it clear that if human passions were managed with more reason than emotion, affairs would arrive at a happy ending more surely and more swiftly, avoiding much confusion and suffering.

Whereas the Angelic Heroines are exemplars of human passions successfully restrained by reason, the victims of this section show what happens when unbridled desire overpowers intellect. The importance of controlling passion with discretion, which reappears in all the novels, is metaphorically presented to the reader near the end of La fuerza de la sangre. Here an unbridled horse tramples the heroine's child, who is left in the street, unconscious and bleeding, forming a symbolic parallel with the beginning of the novel where, the rapist-father, Rodolfo, first appears on a galloping horse, "tramples" (rapes) the unconscious



virgin Leocadia, then abandons her bleeding body in the street.

A brief overview of this novel would reveal that Leocadia's "crime" was that she was a beautiful woman out walking on a public roadway in the company of her parents. In no way did she directly entice the rich, noble youth, Rodolfo, who abducted and raped her. However, from the time that Rodolfo seized her, Leocadia did nothing to stop his attack, since the shock of his actions first took away her power of speech, and then caused her to faint. It is significant that Rodolfo succeeded in the actual rape while Leocadia was still unconscious and even more significant still that, once she had regained her senses, her bold words and determined resistance dissuaded him from completing a second rape. Unfortunately for Leocadia, one loss of consciousness was enough for Rodolfo's uncurbed lust to cause her and her humble "hidalgo" family further humiliation and suffering, since she soon found herself pregnant with her rapist's child.

This is generally regarded as one of the most unpalatable of Cervantes' novellas due, in large part, to the resolution of Leocadia's difficulties by marriage to her rapist, an immature brute who is interpreted as having been redeemed as a suitable mate for her by the symbolic shedding of the blood of their son, Luisico, in an accident which happened fortuitously just outside Rodolfo's parents' house seven years after the rape.<sup>20</sup> It is common for critics to

concentrate on the carefully balanced structure of this novel and/or on a religious interpretation, including the miraculous nature of Leocadia's delivery from dishonor, the dialectics of sinner and redeemer, the notion that we are all sinners in need of redemption and forgiveness, and the belief that all sinners must accept whatever God metes out as part of His plan.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the interpretation of the spilled blood of Luisico as redemptive son, the "sangre" of the title provides a wealth of other interpretive possibilities: the blood of Christ (who redeems all sinners), the lost virginity of the mother (which entitles her to marriage with the man who "took" her as his "wife"), the symbolic menstrual blood of woman (who controls the mystery of life and birth), and finally, the blood of family ties mentioned in the text--"permitido todo por el cielo y por la fuerza de la sangre, que vio derramada en el suelo el valeroso, ilustre y cristiano abuelo de Luisico" (NE II 95)--which enables Rodolfo's father to recognize Luis as his grandson, thus paving the way for the legal marriage of the child's parents. The variety of interpretations enriches and clarifies the text for the reader. In fact, the symmetrically repetitive nature of the text's structure seems to require multiple interpretations and prevents the various possibilities from being mutually exclusive. However, one interpretation which is excluded is the blood of revenge, which would have been typical in a Golden Age

novel. However, that revenge was not seriously considered by any of Leocadia's family.<sup>22</sup> This lack of a desire for revenge, supplanted by a clear desire for remediation, in a situation which would clearly call for the expiatory blood of the criminal marks this novel in two ways. First, it becomes more "realistic," i.e., more practical, according to evidence of common procedures in such cases of rape. Second, it supports the claim that this is in fact a "women's novel"--women control the action and women, traditionally, do not seek revenge, but retribution (Welles 241).

In La fuerza de la sangre, Cervantes both confirms some traditional views and subtly challenges others. However, there are two points which would appear to have been misread or missed in current critical essays: the evidence of Leocadia and her family having been assigned (albeit indirectly and for reasons which are in fact contradictory) a share of the guilt in the crime of her rape; and the evidence of a continuity of attitudes regarding rape and its accepted fictional treatments from Golden Age Spain to the present.

First, regarding the question of guilt, in spite of the opening scene describing Leocadia and her family as sheep beset by wild wolves ("Encontráronse los dos escuadrones, el de las ovejas con el de los lobos . . ." NE II 77), Leocadia, and most particularly her family, are not presented as totally blameless, at least not in the final perpetration of the rape that follows her abduction.

However, there is the hint of something more than an assignment of guilt based solely on a belief that Leocadia was a daughter of Eve in a male-privileged world. The idea of blame being placed on the woman, or perhaps more accurately, made a lighter burden on the shoulders of the man, due to the supposedly seductive nature of woman, is complicated by a view often present in Cervantes' works which is almost antithetical to the first-- that is, that woman ought to be prepared for life's problems by being exposed to those problems or, put simply, that overprotection is a negative rather than a positive.

Regarding the second point, wherein the commonly assumed lack of modern reader sympathy for La fuerza de la sangre's type of victim-rapist interactions is considered, the questions become, "Whose attitudes?" and "Which modern readers?" Once those questions have been answered, it can be shown that in at least some sectors, modern society has not gone so far beyond Cervantes' Spain as one might think.

That Cervantes reflected and apparently accepted without great hesitation certain aspects of his society's traditional views on rape is supported by the description of Costanza's noble father in La ilustre fregona. Don Diego's description of his being overcome by the great physical beauty of the young widow whom he then raped and left to bear his child is not made with any pride ("Era por extremo hermosa, y el silencio, la soledad, la ocasión, despertaron en mí un deseo más atrevido que honesto" NE II 194), but

neither does the reader see the portrait of a criminal in this upper class noble gentleman. Further, his story is readily accepted by all present, as if it were quite "natural." As distasteful as this nonchalant attitude toward the crime of rape might be (especially to today's feminist readers), in fact, the differences between actual legal practice, public opinion, and reader expectations from the sixteenth to the twentieth century may not present the chasm one might expect, particularly in the area of prejudice towards victimized groups or individuals, whether they be rape victims or victims of other crimes. For example, the social class of a rape victim in relation to that of the attacker, what the victim was wearing, where she was first seen by the attacker, what she might have said or done to provoke or avoid the attack, not only whether, but how hard she fought off the attack, and whether the victim was threatened with (or actually harmed by) the use of a weapon are all points that have been considered relevant not only in past times, but in this century as well.<sup>23</sup> It is an unpleasant fact of human development that attitudes toward the rapist and the rape victim, and even the very definition of what constitutes a rape have been and, unfortunately, are sometimes still today matters of contention in courts of law, and perhaps even more so in the judgmental eyes of public opinion.<sup>24</sup> This explanation of the historical rationale for modern attitudes towards rape highlights the distressing continuity between past and present:

In that the historical roles of men and women differ, a man being seen as a person (actor) and a woman being seen as a thing (property), rape is a person illegally taking a thing. More importantly, though, as a "thing," a woman is thought to be almost wholly passive, devoid of both judgment and decision. At the same time, however, the history of rape is not one in which women are relieved from responsibility. Women are held accountable for 'asking for it' in cases where they have been accused of dressing provocatively or even of "being where they shouldn't have."<sup>25</sup>

In light of some of today's unenlightened views on rape, it is hardly surprising that in the early days of the Reconquest in Spain, penalties for crimes of rape varied widely depending upon a variety of factors, particularly upon the status of victim (married, single, widow, nun) and the social class of both victim and attacker. For example, the rape of an young maiden was generally much less serious than the rape of a married woman, since the married woman's attacker had dishonored her husband by usurping his privileged position. In the case of the single woman the penalty frequently was a fine, with or without the requirement of the subsequent marriage of attacker and victim, with that required only if they were of the same social class. In the same towns that imposed monetary penalties for the crime of raping a single woman, the rape of a married woman might be punished by execution. Exceptions to the usual penalties were sometimes made in frontier towns interested in increasing their populations by almost any means--which thereby led to protection of kidnapers bringing in new women to settle in the female

starved areas, with apparently few questions asked about the woman involved. The tradition of forgiving young rapists who supposedly had been overcome by the physical beauty of a young girl and the marriage of the two parties, providing the girl was not of a class substantially lower or higher than her attacker, was certainly well-rooted in Spanish tradition and early town laws (Dillard 12-14).

Although Cervantes' fictional interpretation of the implications and ramifications of rape is not far from certain aspects of some modern legal cases (while remaining in line in a historical context), it is specifically that interpretation which is regarded as distinguishing La fuerza de la sangre from one that might be written today. Nevertheless, in addition to the existence of antiquated notions regarding rape in modern courts, current research on popular modern literature and its readers would seem to indicate that similar fictional tales not only might be, but are being written this century. It is just that they are not being written for the academic audiences dedicated to the study of Cervantes' works, and they are not being written by authors judged by modern critics to be of Cervantes' caliber. Moreover, the total acceptance by the victim and her family of the rapist, which is often criticized as either lacking verisimilitude or as being in poor taste, is not so far from some modern fiction as critics have generally believed--at least not for some audiences.

In Janice A. Radway's Reading the Romance: Women,

Patriarchy, and Popular Literature, which deals with typical readers of "supermarket" romances, evidence can be found that for specialized audiences, certain ideas regarding male and female sexuality have changed very little since the sixteenth century. For example, in agreement with Golden Age moralists, "the Smithton [the small U.S. town studied by Radway] readers believe that if a woman fails to disguise her sensuality properly, she will run the risk of exciting the uncontrollable male 'sex-drive,' which will then demand to be released." Further, Radway shows that, in Smithton at least, forgiveness of rapist-heroes who later marry the raped heroines is considered normal, both by other characters within the novel (as with Leocadia and her family), and by the readers studied. One can easily imagine that Cervantes' audience would have differed little on this point. Finally, in modern popular literature, since the rapist initiates the sexual contact, which awakens the heroine's repressed sexuality, he is ultimately responsible for her newly responsive self and "she is free, then, to enjoy the pleasures of her sexual nature without having to accept the blame and guilt for it usually assigned to women by men" (Radway 143). Could Cervantes have gone so far? Perhaps surprisingly, yes. There are certainly hints of this too in Cervantes' portrayal of Leocadia and Rodolfo, "estos dos venturosos desposados, que muchos y felices años gozaron de sí mismos, de sus hijos y de sus nietos . . . (NE II 95). So it would seem that, rather than being an unpalatable



relic of the past, this novel in fact is no more than an early member of a literary continuum whose gothic cousins are even now titillating fans.

Yet what of the implication of the guilt of Leocadia in the crime of her own rape? First there is the obvious "moralist's" answer--that is, if Leocadia had been properly "pie quebrada y en casa" (or not in the "wrong place"), the rape could never have occurred. Of course, this implicates not only Leocadia, who was ultimately responsible for protecting her own virginity--to the death, if necessary--but also her parents, and most especially her father, the guardian of the family's honor. Further, since beautiful women were considered to be dangerous to all men's virtue, and since Rodolfo later describes himself as one easily overcome by beauty, Leocadia and her family might be blamed for insufficiently disguising a dangerous, provocative gateway to hell. These two arguments would seem to be in line with traditional Golden Age thought. However, beyond her presence in the wrong place at the wrong time, and beyond the possibility of an incompletely hidden sensuality, there is an aspect of this novel which has been dealt with lightly, or in some cases incorrectly, by the critics.<sup>26</sup> This is the fact of Leocadia's unconsciousness at the time of her rape and the possible link of this lack of consciousness, with implications of her passive participation (or absolute physical submission to Rodolfo's

"definition" of the situation), and a subsequent assignment of a share of the "guilt" in the crime of her own rape.

As stated by one researcher whose work analyzes statistics detailing the degree of resistance of the attacked victim and the subsequent success or failure of the rape itself:

In a sense, the rapist is saying, 'This is a rape, and as a woman, your role is to submit.' If the victim does nothing, it is submission. On the other hand, if the woman resists, she says, 'This is not a rape, and you have no right to make these demands. You are violating the situation.' . . . However, since the effect of resistance has a different outcome than no resistance, we need to understand how and why it works. It is clearly not a case of sheer physical strength on the part of the woman, for the man in virtually every case had the strength to overcome any resistance; therefore, it must be something else. And the 'something else,' we are proposing, is the definition in charge of the situation. (Sanders 75)

In a similar vein, Pabon, in his article on "Secular Resurrection through Marriage in Cervantes' La señora Cornelia, Las dos doncellas and La fuerza de la sangre" explained the success of the first rape attempt and the failure of the second as a result of Leocadia's first passively mirroring (when unconscious), and then actively refusing to mirror Rodolfo's desire:

"Haz cuenta, traidor y desalmado hombre . . . que los despojos que de mí has llevado son los que pudiste tomar de un tronco o de una columna sin sentido . . . Desmayada me pisaste y aniquilaste; mas ahora que tengo bríos, antes podrás matarme que vencerme" (NE II 81).<sup>27</sup>

In other terms it might be said that in the second, failed, rape attempt, not only does Leocadia scorn Rodolfo for his

objectification of her and then refuse to accept that objectification, she also forcefully "redefines the situation" for him with deeds as well as words ("se defendió son las manos, con los dientes y con la lengua" NEII, 81), surprising even herself with the maturity and skill of her self-defense.

After Leocadia's eloquent verbal self-defense when she is conscious, the reader is faced with a happy ending that is all the more incongruous. It is an ending which simply cannot work without Leocadia bearing a share of the guilt or at least lightening the burden of Rodolfo's crime. While this might seem at first to be too cruel to fit within the realm of fictional possibilities in any Cervantine novel, on closer analysis it becomes not only a valid interpretation, but the best way to explain the reconciliation and marriage of victim and attacker that is so unpleasant and difficult for many modern readers to accept (possibly because our discomfort stems from a need to deny the guilt that is so subtly implied).

Leocadia was "guilty" because she was a beautiful maiden out in public, and because she was both unprepared to resist and actually failed to resist her attacker. In addition, more evidence to justify this interpretation of Leocadia's guilt, evidence which demonstrates the contradictory nature of a confusing and confused world in the midst of frightening changes, can be found in a comparison of other novels from the collection. It is

obvious that Cervantes, unlike the protective parents described in Chapter 3, did not use his works to advocate a return to the safer, pre-Reformation times of uneducated and unseen women (Ortega Costa 98). In other tales, good women of noble blood who had been exposed to the world (and who always knew how to read), such as Preciosa of La gitanilla and Costanza of La ilustre fregona, fared much better than women like El celoso extremeño's Leonora and Teodosia and Leocadia of Las dos doncellas, who were sheltered.

In La fuerza de la sangre, Leocadia is described specifically as unaccustomed to dealing with any men other than her father and her confessor:

hágote saber que, fuera de mi padre y de mi confesor, no he hablado con hombre alguno en mi vida y a pocos he oído hablar con tanta comunicación que pueda distinguirles por el sonido de la habla (NE II 81).

Yet, since she was not raped a second time due only to her own verbal and physical defense when Rodolfo began "dando muestras que quería volver a confirmar en él su gusto y en ella su deshonra" (NE II 81), it seems a logical conclusion that even the first rape might not have been successful if Leocadia had been better prepared to deal with life's evils, thus preventing fear from striking her dumb and causing her to lose consciousness as she was being dragged away. Leocadia herself readily, perhaps all too readily, assumed an attitude of culpability--"¿Estoy en el limbo de mi inocencia o en el infierno de mis culpas?" (NE II 79)-- while her father, ineffectual protector of his own honor,

soothed her with an eloquent speech on public and private shame and honor:

Y advierte, hija, que más lastima una onza de deshonra pública que una arroba de infamia secreta. Y pues puedes vivir honrada con Dios en público, no te pene de estar deshonrada contigo en secreto: la verdadera deshonra está en el pecado y la verdadera honra en la virtud. Con el dicho, con el deseo y con la obra se ofende a Dios; y pues tú, ni en dicho, ni en pensamiento, ni en hecho le has ofendido, tente por honrada, que yo por tal tendré . . . (NE II 84)

In fact, a larger portion of the blame for her successful abduction might well be assigned to her parents for not preparing her better to deal with the evils of the world, or in other words, for complying too well with the "pie quebrada" notion of women.

Finally, in considering the importance of Leocadia's loss of consciousness, it must be noted that Leocadia faints not once, but three times within the space of this novel; and at each point, finding herself already powerless to act in her own behalf and helpless to effect changes regarding her own future, she physically, as well as symbolically, relinquishes control to another--either Rodolfo or his mother. Critics tend to agree that these fainting episodes are crucial to the meticulously balanced structure of the work. And whereas Calcraft notes the symmetry and interprets this loss of consciousness as a passing from light to dark, from confusion to reason, it is clear from the text that in at least the second and third of the three spells, Leocadia faints at precisely the time when ceding conscious control of her life to another opens up the possibility of a

socially acceptable remedy for her dishonor (as noted in Calcraft 198-199). She faints when trying to convince Doña Estefanía that she was raped by Rodolfo, with God (by way of the crucifix which she stole) as her witness, and that she is thereby entitled to marriage, or what she describes as "la enmienda que se me debe hacer" (NE II 88). Then she faints again when she is in Rodolfo's presence the second time and is hoping for her betrothal to him at last:

Consideraba cuán cerca estaba de ser dichosa o sin dicha para siempre. Y fue la consideración tan intensa y los pensamientos tan revueltos, que le apretaron el corazón de manera que comenzó a sudar y a perderse de color en un punto, sobreviniéndole un desmayo, que la forzó a reclinar la cabeza en los brazos de doña Estefanía . . . (NE II 93).

This betrothal, the acceptable end that she is seeking when she physically submits her conscious self to another's will, involves a re-enacting, this time within the bounds of the laws of the Church and society, of the first cause of her fainting and of her loss of honor, that is, her possession by Rodolfo. That she specifically desires this sexual consummation of legal marriage (as opposed to the earlier consummation of carnal desire in violation of the law), and not just the marriage ceremony and regaining of honor for its own value, is evident from the text:

Y en esto se le iba entrando por los ojos a tomar posesión de su alma la hermosa imagen de Leocadia, la cual, en tanto que la cena venía, viendo también tan cerca de sí al que ya quería más que a la luz de sus ojos, con que alguna vez a hurto le miraba, comenzó a revolver en su imaginación lo que con Rodolfo había pasado. Comenzaron a enflaquecerse en su alma las esperanzas que de ser su esposo su madre le había dado, temiendo que a la cortedad de su ventura habían

de corresponder las promesas de su madre. (NE II 92-93).

Apparently Leocadia is very much like those raped heroines of twentieth century supermarket romances described by Radway. Rodolfo has, in fact, awakened Leocadia's sexuality. He is the cause and the one responsible for that awakening. However, although she desires, her desire is tempered by strict adherence to the legal limits set by Church and tradition. Moreover, in spite of being accused of remaining "a libidinous S.O.B." (Gitlitz 113) throughout the course of this novel (an accusation which is hard to refute), it is evident from the text that Cervantes attempted to show some maturation of Rodolfo's character after during his seven year absence when he explains to his mother his vision of a successful marriage--"Mozo soy, pero bien se me entiende que se compadece con el sacramento del matrimonio el justo y debido deleite que los casados gozan, y que si él falta, cojea el matrimonio y desdice de su segunda intención" (NE II 91). Maturation is also evidenced by the change in his desire for Leocadia from his first glimpse of her when "la mucha hermosura del rostro . . . le llevó tras sí la voluntad y despertó en él un deseo de gozarla a pesar de todos los inconvenientes que sucederle pudiesen." (NE II 77-8) to the meeting in his parents house when he again saw her beauty and only said to himself "Si la mitad desta hermosura tuviera la que mi madre me tiene

escogida por esposa, tuviérame yo por el más dichoso hombre del mundo" (NE II 92).

Cervantes makes it quite clear that Leocadia is the perfect mate for the still sensuous, but mildly restrained, Rodolfo. Rodolfo's speech to his mother regarding his need for a beautiful and virtuous woman pinpoints Leocadia as the logical choice for his perfect mate, "La hermosura busco, la belleza quiero, no con otra dote que con la de la honestidad y buenas costumbres; que si esto trae mi esposa, yo serviré a Dios con gusto y daré buena vejez a mis padres" (NE II 91). Furthermore, the description quoted above, of Leocadia's memory of her rape, which causes her third and final fainting spell, is an even more effective way of making this clear, at least from the point of view of a future wife who might logically be thought to harbour resentments and lack a true physical attraction for her rapist. Not only is Leocadia physically beautiful, it is obvious that she is also capable of enjoying her husband and her own sexuality. However, Rodolfo's example has shown that sexual desires unhampered by reason are dangerous. Thus, Leocadia's goodness, and her need to remain within the law, even to the point of not seeking another mate through deceit (by carrying the cover-up of her "nephew" Luisico's identity to its logical end), were the necessary elements to salvage Rodolfo from the fires of hell by limiting his sexual activities to one woman, his legal wife.

The text does not support the claim that marriage lust



is the same as rape lust.<sup>28</sup> While "marriage lust" is shown working in conjunction with intellect, rape lust is shown as mindless violence. Finally, the emphasis in the text on the numbers of Leocadia's and Rodolfo's happy descendants hints that their intimacies were dedicated, at least nominally, to the Church prescribed desire for procreation.

Cervantes does not come across as a judgmental writer. Generally, even when he has his women characters act in a manner that would clearly be judged as wrong by his society's standards, the bulk of the burden of blame is implied to have been placed on other influential characters or it is denied altogether.<sup>29</sup> However, in the cases of rape in both La fuerza de la sangre and La ilustre fregona, with the nonchalant treatment accorded to the rapists, he is indirectly placing blame on the victims themselves--both for their passivity and for the very fact that they are women.

It is unfortunate that, in spite of Cervantes' constant attention to the woman's position, when dealing with the topic of rape, he succumbed to and helped to perpetuate the myth of uncontrollable, biologically determined, sexual urges in the male, a view which in the long run contributes to the perpetuation of power structures of male domination and violence toward women. By indirectly supporting these notions, although praising Leocadia's moral perfection and having her honor defended by her father's well-reasoned speech on public and private honor, Cervantes did in fact implicate her in the crime of her own rape. Not only did her

inexperience leave her vulnerable, but her beauty and very presence itself were enough for her to merit a share of the guilt. Although it has been suggested that Cervantes demonstrated an "acute awareness of the injustice of the accepted attitudes that governed relations between the sexes" (McKendrick 74), a theory defensible in almost all cases, in this one area he reveals an atypical callousness. Nevertheless, Cervantes was true to the ideals of his time in his forgiving attitude toward rapists. The reader is left with the distinct impression that this rape was merely a part of God's plan for Leocadia--not a surprising attitude for a post-Council of Trent society (as noted by Descouzis 479). While the supposedly happy ending of this tale supports the lesser status apparently accorded to Rodolfo's crime by the author, happily, when considering the rest of the body of Cervantes' works, it seems to be, at the very least, a most uncommon attitude regarding the treatment of women.

Even though Leocadia's minor contribution to her own victimization places her character closer to the idealized Angelic Heroines than any of the others of this type, the common traits shared by Leocadia and the other "damaged goods" of this section help La fuerza de la sangre function as a cohesive element within the group as well. When discussing Leocadia of La fuerza de la sangre, Teodosia and Leocadia of Las dos doncellas, and Cornelia of La señora Cornelia, Pabon, citing specific examples from the texts,

identified all four heroines as "victims of sight, of being seen or of seeing" (Pabon 111). The narrator's description of Carrizales' first sight of Leonora in El celoso extremeño shows that she could properly be added to this list:

quiso su suerte que pasando un día por una calle,  
alzase los ojos y viese a una ventana puesta una  
doncella, al parecer de edad de trece o catorce años,  
de tan agradable rostro y tan hermosa que, sin ser  
poderoso para defenderse, el buen viejo Carrizales  
rindió la flaqueza de sus muchos años a los pocos de  
Leonora . . . (NE II 102)

There might also be added the qualification that the all of these women's victimizations stemmed, at least in part, from not being prepared or permitted to deal with being seen in a world where one's own free will was the only reliable guardian of personal honor and reputation.

Just as in the case of Leocadia, who might have avoided both loss of consciousness and rape if she had been wiser to ways of the world, the other heroines of this group might also have avoided their crises if they had been more aware. In addition, while Cervantes' treatment of Leocadia, who ends up with a rapist for a husband, stresses to the reader perhaps more forcefully than any of the others the risky notion that sexual relations entitle a woman to her "husband" in the eyes of God, the emphasizing of "the power of the (virginal) blood" occurs in all these novels with differing emphases on various facets of intimate relationships. In La señora Cornelia, neither Cornelia nor the Duke of Ferrara doubts that they are married in the eyes of God; and their separation from each other is only caused

and complicated by external forces and not by the choice of the couple. In the final, altered ending of El celoso extremeño (as opposed to the earlier Porras manuscript which contains the adulterous Isabela), it is significant that the young wife (the renamed Leonora) does NOT consummate her relationship with Loaysa, thus avoiding irreparable damage to her marriage vows (although the shock does kill her husband), thereby leaving no untidy link to the temporal world when she enters the convent after Carrizales' death. In Las dos doncellas, the suspense builds when the beauty Teodosia, who has given up her virginity to Marco Antonio, fearing that Leocadia has also succumbed to Marco Antonio's charms, awaits the answer to her frantic, "¿Te gozó?" For, even though the response was negative, the reader is presented evidence of the frailty of a "marriage" that had not been legalized by secular authorities.

These novels also have in common the fact that, rather than portraying mere receptacles or mirrors of male desire, each of the heroines faces and responds to the force of her own sexual desire. Without doubt, Leocadia of Las dos doncellas is the most aggressive of all, and her victimization (although less serious than Teodosia's) stems not only from being seen, but more from seeing the other "más de aquello que fuera lícito a una recatada doncella" (NE II 217). Although her aggression does not pay off in the way that she had hoped, rather than suffering any dire

consequences for being too "manly," she actually fares at least as well as her less aggressive rival.

Briefly, Las dos doncellas details the adventures of two women, seeking either revenge or satisfaction, who have been deceived by the same man, Marco Antonio. Seeing the error of his attempted deception of Leocadia, not only due to his attachment to Teodosia, but also since he was already fleeing an arranged marriage with a third woman), he has fled to Italy, with two of the three women in pursuit. It is important to note that both Leocadia and Teodosia knew of the third woman, and both played significant parts in their own seductions. This is particularly true with Leocadia, the more active of the two, who was definitely the seductress rather than the seduced party ("me pareció que si le alcanzaba por esposo era toda la felicidad que podía caber en mi deseo" NE II 217). Some critics (notably El Saffar and Amezúa y Mayo) have described Teodosia and Leocadia as two aspects of the same character or as a doubled character, while others (including Thompson and Britt) refute this theory. While it is true that these characters show alternate outcomes to similar situations, to say that they form one character seems contrary to the evidence of the text, particularly since the problems they face are similar, but have marked differences. It would seem more likely that the presentation of two substantially different characters is utilized to heighten the suspense and add variety to the text.

In comparing Leocadia to Teodosia, seeing them as two characters rather than one double, it is important to note that, although Leocadia's marriage to Teodosia's brother Rafael hints at the typically contrived ending wherein nearly everybody of marriageable age has to have somebody to marry, in fact, the adoration professed by Rafael at the end of the novel is adequately supported and developed from the first introduction of Leocadia ("así como oyó decir quién era Leocadia, así se le abrasó el corazón en sus amores" NE II 221), making their marriage the logical and expected conclusion, rather than a surprise. Leocadia certainly is not that shadowy fourth term of the "undesirable" woman described by El Saffar when discussing other sets of characters from Cervantes' works.<sup>30</sup> If anything, it would seem that in this case, and contrary to El Saffar's contention that the fourth term is always a woman, the undervalued figure would have to be Rafael. And although Leocadia's "manly" traits get her into a great deal of trouble, and her vengeful nature might make her less likeable than Teodosia to some readers, the text does not seem to support Britt's theory that Cervantes unquestionably favored Teodosia.<sup>31</sup> The truth of the matter is that Leocadia finally marries a man who adores her, who has risked a great deal to help her, and who has never deceived her, causing Leocadia's greatest fear to be that one day Rafael will look at her "con otros ojos de los que quizá hasta agora, mirándome, os han engañado" (NE II 232). Teodosia, on the

other hand, is bound to a man who has revealed himself to be too immature to handle emotional complications, who ran away and left her (without even waiting to find out whether she was pregnant), and who has made deceit a way of life--first with his parents and their arranged match for him, then with Teodosia, and finally with Leocadia.

Both Las dos doncellas and La señora Cornelia deal with the problem of women who willingly allowed themselves to be seduced, even encouraging their own seductions, and with men who have renegged on a promise to wed those women who were willing to give up their virginity in exchange for that promise. While Las dos doncellas is complicated by the fact that two women are in pursuit of the same man, and both have been given tangible proof of the promise to wed (Teodosia received an engraved ring and Leocadia a signed agreement), a simple solution is permitted by the discovery that not only has Leocadia's agreement been lost, but her virginity remains intact. In La señora Cornelia, on the other hand, Cornelia has no contractual proof of her lover's intent to marry her, but her claim is strongest since she has just delivered his child. Complications in La señora Cornelia do not stem from a rivalry with another lover for the duke's attentions, but from problems caused by his overbearing mother who has hopes that her son will marry another. Both of these novels highlight the justice behind demands to the right to wed, when based on a legitimate promise combined with loss of virginity, while stressing the danger in

relying on such a promise when making the irrevocable decision to give up that "mayor prenda."

All of these heroines take action in hopes of obtaining the desired end to their dishonor, i.e., marriage to (or the death of) the seductor. However, Cornelia, who in the opening scenes has fled the wrath of her brother just after having given birth (much like Feliciana de la Voz from the Persiles), allows the major portion of the action to be handled by two Spanish gentlemen, whereas Teodosia and Leocadia, even while accepting the assistance of Teodosia's brother, take much more militant action on their own behalves (to the point of entering the ocean during a battle to defend Marco Antonio with their swords). Cornelia was hampered, of course, by her weakened condition and by the need to care for her newborn. However, rather than serving as a hindrance, the existence of the child strengthened her claim on the Duke, and it is in fact the child who is first accepted and recognized in the final reconciliation scene.

These novels support the notion that infidelity was a much more serious mistake than pre-marital sex, for Cervantes as well as for the rest of his Golden Age contemporaries. Pre-marital sex could be remedied with the official marriage of the partners, who were often assumed to be married already in the eyes of God, but there was no easy remedy for either the possible case of two "wives" wed by promise to the same "husband" or for the cuckolding of a husband. Of course, the double standard made simple male



infidelity a relatively minor slip, an expected inconvenience. Nevertheless, although a single woman could be redeemed by marriage, it is interesting to note that her indiscretion was traditionally considered more serious than her partner's, since a clear distinction was made between the possibilities of "una mujer que yazga con un hombre" and "un hombre [que] haga el amor con una mujer." 32

Fortunately for the happy resolution of La señora Cornelia, although Cornelia voluntarily participated in sexual relations with the Duke of Ferrara, to the detriment of the honor of her brother and only male guardian, she was a single woman and did so only under an oral contract of marriage, which although increasingly frowned upon by the Church after the Council of Trent, was still considered morally binding. From the evidence of his texts, it would seem that Cervantes was both in agreement with the binding nature of such an oral marriage witnessed only by God, and in agreement with the Church for discouraging it, since the women in these "marriages" are always seen as having fallen prey to a ploy to obtain sexual favors, and only manage to be officially married after overcoming great difficulties and much resistance on the part of their so-called spouses. In Cornelia's case, the match she had chosen for herself was suitable, of her own station, and her brother had shown himself to be most unreasonable in trying to keep her from marrying, marriage being considered the natural state for any woman not destined for the convent. Since her "crimes"

were relatively minor and consisted more of disobedience to her brother and lack of discretion on her part, the way was paved for a happy ending with marriage to her husband-by-promise.

While both Las dos doncellas and La señora Cornelia touch on the problems caused by arranged marriages not based on the love and choosing of the spouses-to-be, El celoso extremeño is the novel which shows most explicitly the tragedies that can result from such matches. It is the only novel of this group which does not end with the happy marriage of the heroine at the end of the novel. Rather, the novel begins with a marriage--the disheartening marriage of a young girl who is portrayed as still so much a child that she plays with dolls ("dio con su simplicidad en hacer muñecas y en otras niñerías, que mostraban la llaneza de su condición y la terneza de sus años" NE II 105). Further, she is married off to an old man who is obviously incapable of satisfying her fully in the marriage bed-- "comenzó a gozar como pudo los frutos del matrimonio, los cuales a Leonora, como no tenía experiencia de otros, ni eran gustosos ni desabridos" (NE II 105). However, since she is so completely innocent of the ways of the world, she does not miss what she does not know, until she is finally inveigled into participating in a liaison with Loaysa, one of Seville's infamous "gente de barrio," by her lascivious and unscrupulous dueña, Marialonso. (As mentioned, in the final known version she does not actually complete her infidelity

but ends "durmiendo tan a sueño suelto como si en ellos obrara la virtud del unguento y no en el celoso anciano" (NE II 130).

Although Leonora shoulders the responsibility for her own actions, adding only that "no os he ofendido sino con el pensamiento" (NE II 134); and although the narrator refers to her (in both the Porras manuscript and the 1613 version) as adulterous; and although she retires to a convent in spite of her dying husband's blessing to marry "aquel mancebo que él la había dicho en secreto" (NE II 134); in reality, in this novel no one is blameless. Just as with Camila in the interpolated El curioso impertinente, who also ended up in a convent, Leonora, who finally collapses under the weight of exterior pressures, and who ultimately is the major transgressor in the strictest letter of the law, is perhaps the least to blame of all. After all, Leonora's impoverished parents, in effect, "sold" their inexperienced child to a rich old man, albeit for what they perceived as her own good and financial security. The pathologically jealous Carrizales sought a too-young bride, not for love but for pride and lust, and out of fear of his own mortality. Loaysa, the disreputable dandy, lusted for lust's sake and determined to scale Carrizales' walls only for the very reason that they presented a mysterious challenge. The "mala dueña," Marialonso, led Leonora to her seduction "casi por fuerza" for her own vicarious thrills and the promise of receiving soon "su contento de recudida" (NE II 129).

In some ways, this tale might be considered the obverse of La gitanilla. For Preciosa, being removed from the reality of everyday life to an atmosphere of complete freedom paid off in maximum virtue, while for Leonora, being removed to total imprisonment was the cause of everyone's downfall. The fact that, in the final version, Leonora did not actually commit the physical act of adultery is a crucial change which alters completely the exemplary message of Leonora's character and is one of the "ulteriores reparos de ejemplaridad" noted by Castro in his comparison of the earlier and the later works.<sup>33</sup> In the Porrás manuscript, as Isabela, Carrizales' wife's devilish glee when preparing to deceive her aging mate eradicates the earlier characterization of childlike innocence and emphasizes her complicity in the crime about to be committed. "Tomóla Isabela el vaso [con el unguento para dormir a Carrizales], y besólo como si besase alguna reliquia."<sup>34</sup> As Isabela, she appears wanton and guilty. But as Leonora, she is at once terrified and then disgusted by her close brush with infidelity. In the Porrás manuscript her entry into the convent is a retreat, a hiding of her shame. In the final version, her entry into the convent is both a victory and a rebellion freely chosen in defiance of her husband's wishes and in spite of Loaysa's greedy hopes.

Leonora's successful resistance at the final moment of Loaysa's attempt at seduction marks the point of her entry into responsible adulthood, in spite of all the misguided

efforts of the adults who have purposely or with all good intentions led her to the gates of corruption. Her free choice of the convent is the best probable solution to rid herself of all negative influences--parents included. It does not seem valid to conclude that "Leonora is consigned to a life of monastic exile" (Cascardi 59). Although her actions may still be considered in some sense a capitulation to what Cascardi (59) describes as "the old symbolic structures" of her society, she does, in fact, choose the convent of her own free will, as her way to independence. Further, a resolution by marriage to her almost-lover would have been nothing more than sure defeat, total capitulation, and the changing of one objectifying, solipsistic master for another. The parallels between the young Carrizales and Loaysa are too obvious to ignore. So, when the still young, but newly matured Leonora finds herself with the opportunity to arrange her own marriage, she recognizes the better Spouse in the Church.

It is obvious that whatever may have precipitated these changes in Isabela/Leonora, they demonstrate a developing maturity. Moreover, she is given credit in the final version, once removed from the influences of her elders and left to her own free will, for successfully repelling Loaysa's advances--and as with Leocadia of La fuerza de la sangre, we may assume this was not just with physical strength, but with both actions and words wiser than "su tierna edad prometían" (NE II 81). Perhaps by allowing her

to remain asleep in Loaysa's arms, Cervantes is reminding the readers that her sexual needs still do exist--even when controlled by restraint--and that she was unjustly handed over to a man incapable of satisfying those needs--a man who when he found his wife in another man's arms went to his room to look for his dagger--but "sin ser poderoso a otra cosa, se dejó caer desmayado sobre el lecho" (NE II 130).

As noted by Castro (HC 144), one of Carrizales' greatest errors was in failing to recognize the sexual needs of all the women in his "harén monógamo." His perverse belief that, rather than permitting a woman's free will to control her own desire, the best course of action to circumvent desire is filling and attempting to fulfill women with sweets, while cutting them off from all contact with the males of any species (even house cats), is the catalyst that led to his own destruction.

In this novel Cervantes made a clear case against May-December marriages which, in an age when older men frequently married younger women, may have been unpopular, although certainly not uncommon. What surely went against some of the popular notions about women is the idea, present in all the novels in this group, that "freedom is the natural habitat--the only habitat--of virtue" (McKendrick 77). While other novels in the group hint at the importance of free will for preserving chastity, this novel states the need in unequivocal terms while demonstrating the tragic results of the opposite--and no more opposite to letting the

free will react unfettered by physical restraints could be found than in the physical, mental, and emotional prison erected by Carrizales as a monument to his own fear.

Although each of the novels in this group has its own peculiar traits, all deal with human imperfections and the nature of desire; and all present different aspects of those problems. However, the overwhelming conclusion, the main claim to exemplarity of these novels, rests in the lesson that desire must be tempered by reason. The reader sees that freedom and free will should form the base of a good marriage, and that women have sexual needs that are no more sinful than those of men.

#### Prostitutes and Sluts

In 1585, the Spanish cleric, Francisco Farfan declared brothels to be "where the filth and ugliness of the flesh are gathered like the garbage and dung of the city."<sup>35</sup> Brothels, in Farfan's estimation, as repositories of human filth, were as necessary as the city dump for dealing with the unavoidable garbage created by everyday living. Whereas prostitutes, serving as the actual physical repositories of man's carnal weaknesses, were not only considered as necessary evils--to be monitored, examined, and sent to the hospital, if necessary, all for "lo que toca al bien común," but were also, in practice, treated as expendible commodities, sacrifices to be used in order that the interior

of the town might be, or seem to be, morally purer.<sup>39</sup> That town fathers, including local clerics, at times approved of the existence of brothels, all the while condemning brothel activities and the women who made the brothel enterprise possible, can be concluded from reading town documents, such as those in Seville which complain about meddling, itinerant preachers who, by their mass conversions, emptied the brothels of their workers and the town patriarchs' pockets of their usual income (as cited earlier in Chapter 3).

Although Cervantes does not describe life in an official government-controlled brothel, in his fiction he does recognize the very real existence of those women who were bound not to one man, but to many--or perhaps more accurately, to all of "man-kind" in general. In reality, prostitutes were, more than perhaps any others, the saddest victims of Cervantes' society--victims of that patriarchal social structure that had left open to them only the lowest social role. However, in contrast to the dehumanizing tone of Farfan's description, Cervantes' characterizations tend to focus primarily on the personality of the character and secondarily on her unorthodox career or sexual morality. One need only read the brief description of the physically abused Cariharta in Rinconete y Cortadillo to realize that Cervantes understood a great deal about the complex relationships and interdependencies of pimps and prostitutes, and to realize that women who survived in the patriarchy with a different approach to sexuality, or by



using their sexuality for survival, were presented, if not with acceptance, then at least with a good deal of understanding and compassion.

In spite of the fact that this same compassionate attitude is evident in El casamiento engañoso in the textual treatment of Campuzano's wayward wife, Estefanía, most major critical studies to date have tended to emphasize what might be termed the male aspects of this novel. Forcione's analysis would have Campuzano experiencing a religious journey through the darkness of sin and confusion to a final arrival at the Christian light of repentance and rebirth. And, just as with the treatment of Cañizares in his analysis of El coloquio de los perros (the second half of this double novel unit), the representative of darkness, evil, and sin is the central female character.<sup>40</sup> Even El Saffar, referring to Cervantes' reader-listeners, claimed in her Cervantes: "El casamiento engañoso" and "El coloquio de los perros" that "ultimately we shall come to recognize ourselves in the wayward Campuzano . . ." <sup>41</sup> But what if we--or at least some of us presumably included in that "we"--do not come to recognize ourselves in Campuzano? What if some of us recognize ourselves in the absent Estefanía --or even in the witch Cañizares? What if, contrary to a contention from Gossy's definitively female-centered critique, some of the readers who are searching "for someone on whom to blame the 'engaño' that undermines the marriage in the text" do not see their condemnation fall "implicitly and sometimes

explicitly, on Estefanía's head--or, rather, on her veil"?<sup>42</sup> What if, when we read Cervantes, we do not read the text that other critics have written for us? Is it indeed possible to learn Forcione's "magnificent lesson without underestimating or losing our ability to gain immediate access to the text"--an immediate access which does not lead to the generally perceived end?<sup>43</sup> What if we read Cervantes from a different point of view, much as the early twentieth-century characters in the recently re-read short story, "A Jury of Her Peers" read an absent character's text from her own perspective, and ended by both identifying her as her husband's murderer and yet still judging her to be innocent of any crime?<sup>44</sup> What if some of us read El casamiento engañoso through the absent Estefanía's eyes? Might we not also then judge her to be both guilty and innocent?

In order for such a critical shift--a shift toward Estefanía and away from Campuzano--to be possible, the reader will have to resist the patriarchal critical infrastructure which pushes the reader toward Campuzano. As urged by Schweickart, the reader will have to "take control of the reading experience" (particularly when reading works taken from the andocentric canon), if not to "read the text against itself," then at least to read the text against the patriarchy that informs the reading process.<sup>45</sup> As part of this liberated reading process, it will be necessary to recognize that, while El casamiento engañoso plays a unique role in the Novelas, serving both as a frame for El coloquio

de los perros and as a tale in its own right, Estefanía also occupies a rather unique position. In a manner comparable only to that used with her supernatural counterpart, Cañizares, most of what the reader learns of her and of her relationship with the soldier lieutenant, Campuzano, has to be first extracted and then reconstructed from a negative perspective--that is, from Campuzano's own self-oriented and self-interested conversation with the licentiate, Peralta. As noted by Gossy, Estefanía is only allowed by Campuzano and his author to speak to the reader on three separate occasions; and if quantities of words are the measure to be used, Gossy is then correct in saying that "this is not her tale" (Gossy 62). But in the final analysis, is it not her tale after all? Even in her absence her presence is felt. Campuzano himself finds her always "en la imaginación" (NE II 291), albeit as an ever-present affront. And when Estefanía does speak, even when her words are filtered through her husband's voice, her story is eloquent--so eloquent, in fact, that the emotional impact of her words often overshadows the tale-teller's own tale. Moreover, Peralta, Campuzano's listener, is often undervalued as representative of the role of the reader (El Saffar, Cervantes 22-25). It is significant that this listener, in spite of his friendship, discounts Campuzano's reliability as a narrator.

Briefly, this novel relates the events leading up to and immediately following Campuzano's doomed marriage to

Estefanía, a woman of very recent acquaintance. From both direct statements and indirect implications in Campuzano's conversation, we learn that neither he nor Estefanía is in the prime of youth. Neither is wealthy. Both are dishonest in their dealings with each other--although to what degrees and for what reasons are the debatable ambiguities that make the text infinitely re-readable. As the text opens, the narrator introduces Campuzano just as he is emerging from the hospital where he has undergone a lengthy treatment for what is later implied to have been an infection of syphilis given to him by his wife. However, since Estefanía is already absent, her side of that story is revealed to us only by Campuzano, the one voice who would have the most to gain--if only in measures of a heightened self-concept and false pride--from the perversion of her text. Nevertheless, just as was done for the murderess by the empathetic townswomen in Glaspell's tale, it is possible for Estefanía's text to be decoded and read between the lines of Campuzano's narrative.

Although Campuzano has been interpreted as a redeemed sinner who emerges from the hospital with only his sword and his "honra" intact (Rodriguez-Luis 53), it would seem obvious that any true redemption on his part is far from being above suspicion. In addition, if only the basic details of the events of his tale are true, then, certainly by seventeenth century standards, his honor has surely disappeared with his wife and his fake "gold" chain; and, if

there is any validity to the use of the sword as a phallic symbol, given the nature of his admission to the hospital, his "sword" is not entirely intact either.

Beyond the simple events narrated, there is little convincing evidence that his version of the tale of his own life is any more reliable than the doubting Peralta perceives the tale of the two dogs to be. Further, Unlike the all-suffering Job of the Bible to whom Campuzano is sometimes compared, even when based on his own admissions, Campuzano's troubles would seem to be more a case of his just desserts than of any holy test. And rather than blaming the "engaño" of the "casamiento" on Estefanía--with or without her veil--it can be seen that, as Campuzano's own words confirm, she was the more honest of the two, and the blame is more heavily weighted on the side of Campuzano.

From Campuzano's story to Peralta, we learn that, when Campuzano met his future bride, she was in the company of a suspected "amiga" of a fellow soldier who was away in Flanders. We also see that he is immediately attracted to her, not by what she reveals, but by what she conceals, both physically--with her veil and her other attire--

se sentó en una silla junto a mí derribado el manto hasta la barba, sin dejar ver el rostro más de aquello que concedía la raridad del manto; y aunque le supliqué, que por cortesía me hiciese merced de descubrirse, no fue posible acabarlo con ella, cosa que me encendió más el deseo de verla (NE II 283)--

and verbally--with her vague implications and an invitation to send a page to her house so that Campuzano might come

later to "see" her--"holgaré de que me veáis" (NE II 283). Thus, we can see that unless Campuzano is more naïve than most soldiers would be expected to be (and since he provided the information regarding her friend it would seem that he is not), he has certainly not understood Estefanía to be a lady of spotless reputation. This is supported when Campuzano offers her in payment for the great favor of the visit (as if he were negotiating a business deal for sexual services) "montes de oro"--in spite of the fact that she has just warned him that she is "más honrada" than her words would indicate (NE II 284).

Evidence of Campuzano's vanity and his less than youthful state, which might make him more likely to "fall" for a dubious invitation, have been noted by El Saffar (Cervantes 25-34), but most important, Campuzano is first attracted by the sight of the jewels on Estefanía's hands: "sacó la señora una muy blanca mano, con muy buenas sortijas," and later by the "casa muy bien aderezada" (NE II 283-4). Thus, his interest in accepting Estefanía's invitation was centered on both his desire for an illicit adventure and the apparent wealth of the "owner" of the rings; and this interest in physical pleasures and material wealth remains constant throughout Campuzano's narration.

When Campuzano goes to "Estefanía's" house, in spite of his unconvincing excuse of falling for her hypnotic voice "que se entraba por los oídos en el alma," it is certainly as a willing participant in what he sees as a game for

sexual favors--a game that lasts four days "sin que llegase a coger el fruto que deseaba" (NE II 284). However, once he has begun playing the game--which turns out in fact to be her game--she tells him quite frankly that, in spite of her spotty reputation ("pecadora he sido" NE II 285), she is looking, not for a lover, but for a husband whom to serve as a faithful wife--"Con esta hacienda busco marido a quien entregarme y a quien tener obediencia; a quien, juntamente con la enmienda de mi vida, le entregaré una increíble solicitud de regalarle y servirle"(NE II 285).

When Forcione, (referring to both Campuzano and Estefanía), states that "Their goals in marriage, money and a life of sensual indulgence and idleness, violate all the purposes of the institution according to traditional Christian doctrine . . . , " he is at least half right--Campuzano is repeatedly portrayed as a self-indulgent fortune-hunter (Forcione, Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness 137). However, it is never made clear that those were Estefanía's goals. Although she promises "her" house as a dowry, just as Campuzano promises his "gold" chain for the family coffers, her lengthy speech in praise of her own worth (which sounds suspiciously like Luís de León's "perfecta casada") details her abilities as a cook, seamstress, and thrifty house manager. This self-description seems an obvious attempt to shift the emphasis regarding her value as a wife to what was, or what might become true, and away from the one point that is sheer fantasy.

Nowhere in the text is Estefanía's claim to be looking for a husband to serve and obey disproved. Campuzano engages in sensual indulgence and idleness while Estefanía and her maid work to serve him, and it is only his part of the marriage that is based on passion--Estefanía's is based on practicality and desperation. None of the subsequent events, as related by Campuzano himself, proves that Estefanía had any intention other than caring faithfully for her husband during the entire time of their brief marriage ("El rato que doña Estefanía faltaba de mi lado, la habían de hallar en la cocina, toda solícita en ordenar guisados que me despertasen el gusto y me avivasen el apetito. Mis camisas, cuellos y pañuelos era un nuevo Aranjuez de flores . . . NE II 287").

Nevertheless, in spite of Campuzano's indisputable faults, Estefanía was not blameless in this perversion of the marital sacrament. There remain two major flaws in her story, and both were unequivocal lies--one regarding "her house" and the other regarding "her cousin." First, the "house" to be used for her dowry belongs not to Estefanía, but to doña Clementa Bueso, a rich friend who is out of town. Although her story about the house is devoid of any hint of truth, it is a lie that has to be discovered, sooner or later, by all parties concerned. It is, of course, possible--but not probable--that Estefanía had planned to be gone with Campuzano's "gold" before the deception was uncovered. Her actions after the unexpectedly early return of her friend do not point to that conclusion. They are



indicative more of a pathetic bid to save her marriage by any means than of any desire to defraud Campuzano.

When Doña Clementa arrives, Estefanía tearfully begs her husband not to believe any of what he hears. Then, when they are evicted, rather than ask her husband to help find a temporary place to stay, she arranges for their accommodations with a less wealthy friend. Her pitiful explanation to Campuzano of the reason for their eviction is quite simply her own story with Clementa's name used in place of her own, and her plea that Campuzano not think badly of "Clementa," nor of "otra mujer alguna de que procure buscar marido honrado, aunque sea por medio de cualquier embuste" (NE II 288) becomes a poignant plea for understanding and leniency in her own case. It is particularly revealing of Campuzano's character that when the duped beau is named "don Lope," his reaction to "Clementa's" use of "Estefanía's" house as a lure for a husband is not of condemnation, nor even of disapproval, but merely of annoyance at Estefanía's simplicity for allowing them to be evicted, even though the inconvenience was in support of "tan sana intención como era alcanzar tan principal marido como don Lope" (NE II 289).

In spite of indications that Estefanía could easily have fled with Campuzano's belongings at any time during their time in Clementa's house or during the six-day span in the new lodgings, Estefanía does not abandon him until she fears for her life. According to Campuzano's own report to

Peralta, even after being told by her friend that Campuzano had been informed of the deception of the house, Estefanía waited to ask "qué semblante había yo mostrado con tal nueva" and only fled after hearing "que, a su parecer, había salido con mala intención y peor determinación a buscarla" (NE II 290). Had Estefanía had any previous plan to flee with Campuzano's "wealth," she would certainly not have been interested in Campuzano's attitude in the matter. Even Estefanía's friend, as a woman who understood the difficult position of unattached aging women, while damning her with the epithet "Mala hembra," defended her by telling Campuzano "aunque, bien mirado, no hay que culpar a la pobre señora, pues ha sabido granjear a una tal persona como la del señor Alférez por marido" (NE II 289).

This defense by her friend makes the third time in the text where the reader encounters an eloquent defense of Estefanía and her actions. As mentioned earlier, Estefanía defended herself both when extolling her virtues as a future wife and when explaining "Doña Clementa's" story; and Campuzano himself defended "Doña Clementa's" good intentions. In light of this mounting defense, it becomes easier to see how Estefanía might be seen as both innocent and guilty, particularly since (judging from Campuzano's own words), she served and sheltered Campuzano, thus fulfilling all of her promises except the one promise which had been the principal attractant for Campuzano--that is, providing the dowry of house and estate.

In contrast to Estefanía, Campuzano did absolutely nothing for either the marriage partnership or for his wife; and he based his entire role in the marriage on deceit. Although Estefanía honestly admits that she is actively looking for a husband, Campuzano, who responds that he is looking for just such a wife as Estefanía "para hacerla señora de mi voluntad y de mi hacienda, que no era tan poca que no valiese" (NE II 285-286), in reality began his adventure looking for something quite different, and admits as much to Peralta when he confides that he only agreed to marriage because he was imagining Estefanía's house "en dineros convertida" (NE II 285). His only contribution to the marital union--for him a "negocio"--was two gold chains which he himself smugly admits to Peralta to have been "de alquimia"(291). He allowed Estefanía and her "maid" to entertain him, to cater to his every whim, and to provide food and shelter. He was so pampered, in fact, that he admits to Peralta that "iba mudando en buena la mala intención con que aquel negocio había comenzado," which, according to the evidence of Campuzano's own words, seems to have been Estefanía's goal (NE II 287). Thus, rather interpreting Estefanía as a despicable and dishonest slut or as "a malevolent female" (Forcione Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness 156) who chose to deceive a man only in order to steal his money, it seems more defensible to describe Estefanía as an aging woman of dubious reputation, who is so desperate to escape her present life, to marry, and to

secure a better life for her old age, that she is willing to feign wealth and even beauty, in order to cause a man to love her enough to stay with her--even after he has made the inevitable discovery of the deception of the house ownership. The tears Estefanía sheds when doña Clementa returns home and when she begs Campuzano to love her enough to not believe what he hears and sees are the desperate pleas of a desperate woman.

But what of the second flaw in Estefanía's story? According to Campuzano, the man supposedly introduced by Estefanía at their wedding as her "cousin" was in fact a (former?) lover-pimp with whom she flees after her deceit regarding the ownership of the house is found out--all of which could lead to the conclusion that Estefanía had intended all along to steal Campuzano's "wealth" and run away with this man. However, there is never any mention of her maintaining any relationship with this "cousin" while she was living with Campuzano and there is little evidence that she had intended to leave with him at all, since, as mentioned above, although she had ample opportunity to take Campuzano's "wealth" and escape after Doña Clementa's return, she only left when she believed that her life was threatened.

Finally, the conversion supposedly experienced by Campuzano when he was overtaken by sleep in the Church on his way to track down Estefanía, "con presupuesto de hacer en ella un ejemplar castigo" could actually be interpreted

as the intervention of the Virgin Mary on the part of Estefanía in order to save her from her husband's wrath-- "Fuime a San Llorente, encomendéme a Nuestra Señora, sentéme sobre un escaño, y con la pesadumbre me tomó un sueño tan pesado, que no despertara tan presto si no me despertaran" (NE II 290). Far from being the evil, dark figure leading Campuzano into an earthly hell so that he might emerge new and purified, Estefanía is easily reread in a more sympathetic way as the pathetic victim of an abusive patriarchy, wherein aging, dowerless, single women felt they had to resort to trickery in order to secure for themselves a place in a society that left them few viable options.

In spite of her apparent attempts at honesty and an honorable marriage, Estefanía could never have been one of the chaste and pure angelic characters, nor would she have ever fit in with the noble victims. However, there are both significant differences and striking similarities between Estefanía and the beautiful and noble characters of novels such as Las dos doncellas. For example, a comparison of Estefanía and Leocadia, both characters who actively pursued a potential mate of their own choosing, would provide the reader with an excellent contrast between the realistic problems of common characters and the idealized world of the nobles. Particularly, the prejudices of Cervantes' society, and modern society as well, regarding the "beautiful people"-- the rich, happy, intelligent, witty, charming perfect players in the dramas written by public opinion and

confirmed and reinforced by the popular media--are effectively highlighted by a comparison of these two similar, but very different women. Further, it becomes obvious that while Cervantes was not averse to writing for and about the beautiful people, neither was he blinded to the realities of the common world.

In both El casamiento engañoso and Las dos doncellas, the women take very active roles. And in both tales, when the women are overly aggressive, i.e., when the women usurp the male role, they obtain negative results (although less negative, of course, in Las dos doncellas). As discussed in a previous section, in Las dos doncellas, Leocadia is more aggressive than Teodosia. Further, while Teodosia seems truly in love with Marco Antonio, Leocadia's "love" is always questionable and seems to be based less on true affection and more on lust and a mercenary desire to attain a good match for herself (regardless of parental approval). In the final scenes, Leocadia's speech accepting Rafael as her mate is long on security, honor, prestige, and making the best of a less than desirable situation, and short on love. In light of her unacceptable lust for Marco Antonio, it is not surprising that Leocadia's part of the tale turns out a bit less in her favor than Teodosia's. Nevertheless, Leocadia is a young, beautiful, wealthy, noble daughter who looks enticing in men's clothing and who surely "deserves" to make a good match and live happily-ever-after.

Estefanía, like Leocadia, tries to secure a good match.

And, like Leocadia, she actively tries to entrap her choice. But here is where the similarities end and the harsh realities of life for an everyday woman in a male-dominated society take over. For, although she at least aspires to a modicum of wealth and a façade of good breeding, Estefanía is obviously without any form of support from the wealthy nobility. Neither is she young and beautiful, but rather well beyond marriageable age. Nor is she spoiled and determined to have her way in spite of the wishes of her parents. As far as the reader knows, she has no living parents or other relatives to help her find an acceptable place in her society (discounting, of course her dubious "cousin"). For Estefanía, rather than the whim of a spoiled teenager, a desire for marriage is more a manifestation of an instinct for survival. She is not in search of a prestigious, handsome mate, but rather a means of getting by in a world where ordinary-looking, aging women without a dowry or a title were without hope. And she knows her society well. What she is without, the very things that Leocadia has, are just what she must pretend to already have in order to successfully entrap the man she misjudges to be a good catch who will turn her fantasy into reality, the man who successfully works his own deceit in order to marry her, also not for love, but for the very things she seems to have but lacks, i.e., "her" house, jewels, and estate.

Just as Leocadia is deceived by Marco Antonio, Estefanía is deceived by Campuzano. However, in comparison

to the elaborate machinations of Campuzano, Marco Antonio's deceit is a minor one, and actually for Leocadia's own benefit since, if Leocadia had lost her virginity to him, her only honorable choice would have been to enter a convent. This allows the reader to feel a sympathy for Marco Antonio that is absent for Campuzano. Estefanía's virginity is not an issue, and Campuzano, after all, cares nothing for anyone's honor and reputation but his own. Further, he does nothing that is not for his own benefit. The reader is left, after his tale of woe, with the impression that he has gotten nothing less than what he deserved. Rather than portraying Estefanía as the party totally at fault for the seedy relationship that develops, Cervantes has carefully shown that both parties were guilty and that, if anything, the pitiful Estefanía is less to blame than Campuzano for having the greater motive to deceive. Further, Campuzano's participation in an equal play of deception serves to point out that men are no better than women, and that deceit is not the sole dominion of women.

Forcione mentions a similarity between Estefanía and the witch, Cañizares, for their "ambiguous and deceitful speech." In fact, in an attempt to survive in a world that is set to work against them, both simply filled socially expected female roles with their ambiguities and deceits--but they did so in a non-passive "male" way--a way which doomed them to failure, even in the eyes of an author as advanced as Cervantes. In the same way, the usurping of the



male roles of seduction and entrapment, by both Estefanía and Leocadia, fail to obtain the desired results (much as Claudia Jerónima's usurping of the male position of revenge against a supposedly unfaithful fiance ends in tragedy in the Quijote, with her murdering, without just cause, the man she loves). However, for the noble and beautiful Leocadia, in spite of her aggression, life turns out well after all, while for the all-too-real Estefanía, life presumably degenerates further.

It is interesting to note that by the time of the Persiles, Luisa, the fallen character who is Estefanía's counterpart, has lost any pathetic qualities and has developed a perverted nature, causing her to merit the ill-treatment that comes her way. Her actions prompt the good innkeeper's wife to declare that "Una de las mejores dotes que puede llevar una doncella es la honestidad que buen siglo haya la madre que me parió, que fue persona que no me dejó ver la calle ni aun por un agujero, cuanto más salir al umbral de la puerta" (Persiles III, VI, 200). This is quite a change from the precedents established in the earlier works wherein characters were advocating maximum freedom of women in order to nurture the self-control necessary to best protect women against seduction by unscrupulous men.

Estefanía is not the only glimpse of the seamier side of life in the Novelas ejemplares. In Rinconete y Cortadillo, the abusive pimp-prostitute relationships that exist in Monipodio's underworld gang are portrayed with a

good deal of insight. "La Colindres," the prostitute who worked in cooperation with the local sheriff, as described briefly by Berganza in El coloquio de los perros, evokes very little sympathy. And, just as in the Quijote, Aldonza Lorenzo, who "no es nada melindrosa, porque tiene mucho de cortesana" (DQ I XXV 299), provides a comic contrast to the pure Dulcinea, the lower class Cornelia, who is surprised in the page's quarters, adds to the entanglement of the plot when confused with the upper class heroine of the same name in La señora Cornelia. What all of these women have in common is that they are lacking in chastity and acceptable moral values. But significantly, the point where they differ is in the nuances of their characterization. In the black and white, Mary/Eve dichotomy of Spanish tradition, prostitutes, at least unreformed prostitutes, might reasonably be expected to be portrayed as inherently evil, negative characters--just as beautiful, noble women should always be good. However, that is not the case in the Novelas ejemplares. (Nor was it so in the Quijote where it was, after all, the mischievous Maritornes who took pity on Don Quijote after his misadventures at the inn while the haughty Altisidora thrived on tormenting him). True to the realistic nature of the less idealized novels, as in real life, prostitutes are neither all good nor all bad, but a mixture somewhere in between.

Witches

Witches. "Why witches? . . . Because witches dance . . . Because witches sing . . . Because witches are alive . . . Because witches are rapturous . . ." In Xavièr Gauthier's defense for her choice of title for the journal Sorcières, she prods her readers with the question, "Why witches?" and then in a flurry of twentieth-century feminism she responds and responds and then responds twice more with images of a dancing, singing, vital and sensuous woman forced to wrest control of her own sexuality from a repressive society which tried to deny to her any assertion of her own identity.<sup>44</sup> And Cervantes . . . Why witches in Cervantes? Why would Cervantes, as a seventeenth century male who seems otherwise dedicated to justice and general tolerance, re-create the perfect symbol of depraved anti-Christian feminine evil? Why would he help to perpetuate one of history's most ideologically damaging myths about women and about female sexuality? Did witches serve only as a convenient literary vehicle to lend credibility to phenomena such as talking dogs? Were they merely a nod of approval to or an attempt to "buy insurance" against indictment by the Inquisition censors? Indeed, why witches?

In the modern feminist calls to reread, reevaluate, and finally to revise the canon, witches stand out in literature as symbols of the problems of a male dominated society. Approximately eighty-five percent of those executed for

witchcraft were women.<sup>45</sup> Incidences of witch trials and witch burnings have traditionally been more common whenever the natural or political ills of society have resulted in mass tragedies. Crop failures, plagues striking livestock or people, floods, famines all seem to be tied to an increased interest in routing out "servants of the devil." On a more individual basis, whenever the personal tragedy of the loss of an infant or a child was suffered, it was not unusual to look for the cause--or the blame--in the person of the midwife or local folkhealer. Midwives were in fact so closely tied to the identification of the witch that no less than four sections of the judges' handbook The Malleus Maleficarum are devoted to Midwife-Witches. Of course these women had put themselves particularly at risk by daring to meddle with the forbidden mysteries of life, death, and procreation. Like Adam and Eve, they had dared to partake of the tree of Forbidden Knowledge and were thus the first to be sought when revenge against the forces of nature was in order. If Cervantes' witches are representative of only the dominant point of view, then it would seem logical to conclude that his inclusion of them in his works was no more than an overt display of support for the system in power. And, in at least some respects, perhaps it was just such a display. However, a closer reading, a re-reading, does not limit these characters to mere display of support.

According to the witch hunters Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, who wrote their infamous Malleus Maleficarum

under the auspices of Pope Innocent VIII, not believing in witches was in itself a form of heresy.<sup>46</sup> In light of the evidence of his texts it seems that few would doubt, the sincerity of Cervantes' Catholic beliefs. Nevertheless, one can believe, or believe that one believes, and still reveal a lack of conformity with the belief system in its entirety. Cervantes' witches, read from a woman's point of view, can be seen as falling outside the boundaries of total conformity with the dominant system. Whatever Cervantes may have believed regarding the actual existence of truly supernatural "witches," magic, and spells, it is apparent that he was not blinded to the realities of his society's so-called "witches," even though popular opinion and the Inquisition might have held to the contrary.

The most famous of Cervantes' witches, Cañizares, appears in El coloquio de los perros. In the other Novelas ejemplares, only in El licenciado vidriera and La española inglesa are the unfortunate results of the works of herbalists mentioned. Finally, both of these variations on the witch theme (witch and herbalist) reappear in the Persiles. Although Cervantes never wavered in showing his distrust for the "herbalist" aspect of the witch profession (a distrust held for approved university-educated physicians as well, although he does show some sympathy for war-trained surgeons in Las dos doncellas), his portrayal of Cañizares--when read as a self-contained characterization divorced from the protective frame of Berganza's commentaries, does not

read like a traditional "wicked witch" fairy tale. Like the Inca sun symbol buried in the text of "Christian" plays, Cañizares' words gain new meaning when interpreted on their own merit, as a separate text within a text. As she speaks herself, her words incite pity, sympathy, and, perhaps in some readers, empathy for the old and lonely social outcast. She does not come across as an evil monster over whose death would please the engaged reader. It is true that this glimpse of a sympathetic character is brief, and lies buried between layers of derogatory commentary, but however brief and buried, her story is there in her own words for the reader to judge and interpret.

In some ways Cañizares represents the epitome of the perfect prey of the witch hunters, Kramer and Sprenger. First, she is female, and as such is, by their definition:

feebler both in mind and body . . . more carnal than a man . . . [and] formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives . . . Therefore a wicked woman is by her nature quicker to waver in her faith and consequently quicker to abjure the faith, which is the root of witchcraft. (Kramer and Sprenger 44-45)

While some convicted witches were young and beautiful, old women, society's outcasts, form the traditional vision of a witch. Cañizares is described as "una vieja, al parecer de más de setenta años"--but, as she stresses, "no . . . tan vieja que no pueda vivir un año" (NE II, 335). Moreover, she admits to flying through the air (or at least to having the sensation that she does) to attend the witch gatherings,

where she willingly participates in, or imagines that she participates in, unspeakable and nauseating acts: "y pasan otras cosas que en verdad y en Dios y en mi ánima que no me atrevo a contarlas, según son sucias y asquerosas . . ." (NE II 339).<sup>47</sup> She admits to consorting with a diabolic "cabrón" and finally in Berganza's presence, she anoints her nearly nude body with the infamous witches' unguent and falls to the floor in a stupefied rapture. Until their deaths, her two friends and closest companions, Camacha and Montiel (Berganza's alleged mother) were also witches. And while Montiel died of maternal anguish at the enchantment and loss of her dog-sons, Camacha was executed by the Holy Office for her heresies. Cañizares' description of Camacha, the witch who allegedly transformed Berganza and his "brother" into dogs, is of a perfectly evil and deceitful woman who refuses to enter into true sisterhood with her colleagues because she refuses to share her greatest secrets, thereby maintaining her own supernatural superiority. She ends by enchanting the newborn twins of Montiel for reasons of an unspecified jealous whim. regarding the enchantment, she keeps her silence until she sees herself near death. In any context, this description of Camacha would evoke little sympathy from even the softest heart. Further, Cañizares herself, having once been released by the Inquisition, continues in her heresies.

On first first inspection, then, Cervantes' witches would seem to follow a model for the ideal witch. However,

upon closer examination, it becomes obvious that, although female, they do not fit precisely Kramer and Sprenger's definition. They seem anything but ignorant and feeble minded. As Cañizares describes them, she and her two friends are intelligent and well aware of the "error" of their ways. Like smokers addicted to nicotine, like alcoholics addicted to gin, like any pleasure seekers looking for an immediate relief from the pain of everyday reality, they have chosen their damnation for the pleasures of the moment. Camacha comes across as a vicious and evil character. Nevertheless, although Cañizares (as did Montiel before her death) claims to have tried to find the strength to pry herself free from the pleasures of witchcraft, and shows evidence that she did, in fact, succeed in some ways, she was unable to deny herself the pleasures refused to her in any legitimate manner through any role open to her in traditional society-- that is, the physical pleasure of the sexual act which she feels herself experience with her "cabrón."

Cañizares, unlike Camacha, does not seek greater glory than her comrades, "Yo fui siempre algo medrosilla; con conjurar media legión [de demonios] me contentaba" (NE II 338). Moreover, in the typical language of women, she takes care to praise her friend Montiel, whom she truly treats as a friend, diluting her bad traits by highlighting her good, "Tu madre . . . de muchos vicios se apartó; muchas buenas obras hizo en esta vida; pero al fin murió bruja . . ." (NE II 338). She has retained ties of loyalty even beyond



the grave by trying to find Montiel's enchanted sons: "y para poder conocerlos, a todos los perros que veo de tu color los llamo con el nombre de tu madre . . ." (NE II 339). In fact, her joy at "finding" Berganza, whom she "recognizes" as Montiel, seems most genuine. She ends by clearly stating that her greatest desire in life is to be able to meet her friend again (or rather her ghost) in order to discover if she has any needs: "quizá alguna vez la toparé yo, y le preguntaré si manda que haga alguna cosa en descargo de su conciencia" (NE II 341).

Thus, in her own self-portrayal, which reads more like a confession than a story, Cañizares personifies loyalty, humility, and generosity of spirit--far from the vision of the jealous Camacha that she creates for the reader. Nevertheless, she does not claim to be nor does she seem to fit the definition of a "white witch." As she admits, her job as a "hospitalera" is more to earn an income and to calm wagging tongues than to do any particular good. She is particularly interested in appearances and touts the necessity of public good deeds, "este consejo te doy: que seas bueno en todo cuanto pudieres; y si has de ser malo, procura no parecerlo en todo cuanto pudieres" (NE II 340). However, no matter how selfish the motives, it is clear that she is using her medical skills to help rather than hurt her fellow citizens.

Although she does not deny that witches kill children (with God's permission!), as described by Kramer and

Sprenger (140-144), she is quick to point out that her unguent, which she is known for making exceptionally well, is made, not of infants' blood, but of herbs. Further, she casts a good bit of doubt on the actual activities of witches by insisting that many festivals and flights may be imagined, not real: "y entonces dicen que en la fantasía pasamos todo aquello que nos parece pasar verdaderamente" (NE II 342). As if to prove this, Cervantes has her fall into and remain in a trance on the floor in Berganza's presence rather than having her fly out the window.

Up to this point in the narration, nothing has occurred or has been mentioned about Cañizares which is particularly shocking. The truly horrible scene of this whole episode of El coloquio de los perros is Berganza's description of the pathetic old woman's physical body as he drags her into the view of her neighbors, leaving her there to be prodded, gawked at, and stabbed with needles until she finally comes to consciousness. However, this scene is horrible, not for its supernatural reasons, but because of the accuracy of its description of the effects of aging, a process which threatens us all but, as noted by feminists for decades, threatens the very self-identity of women in whom physical beauty is tied to their traditional role as objects of desire. Even worse, the description of an old, and therefore, undesirable and supposedly un-desiring woman, a very old naked woman in the throes of those forbidden desires, in Berganza's words, is truly horrible.

But is Berganza's description shocking it is the description of a witch rather than just of an old woman? Not if the reader is to take into account the words of the other humans who flock to the balcony in answer to Berganza's barking. It is, in fact, suggested that she has fallen into a saintly rapture. It is only when her past activities are brought up that this possibility is dismissed. When she finally comes out of her trance and finds herself, not in the privacy of her darkened bedroom, but surrounded by gawking townspeople, her nude body being violated by hands and needles, one can't help but feel that she is more than justified when she attacks Berganza and calls him "bellaco, desagradecido, ignorante y malicioso" for his payment of her efforts, as she labels them--"las buenas obras que a tu madre hice y de las que te pensaba hacer a ti" (NE II 345).

By extracting Cañizares' text from Berganza's prejudiced context, what the reader comes to see is a poor old woman who has sinned against the rules of a male dominated society to achieve her own forbidden pleasures. Her one obvious flaw is her overt sexuality, her honest recognition of and catering to her own desire, in an age where desire was to be denied in all, particularly in women, and most particularly in old women.

Of course, the possibility exists that she simply misrepresented herself completely to Berganza. But why lie to a dog? In fact, her text reads more like a confession than a story. Further, even if she were sure he was not a

dog and therefore a reason might be found to "need" to lie to him, why had she bothered to seek him out in the first place--unless it were for her stated purpose of loyalty to her friend? Finally, in spite of the fact that she admits to being a private sinner, in her confession to Berganza she is, unfortunately for her, open, honest, and trusting in all she says and does in his presence. It seems unlikely that she would have lied in other things without probable cause and the text reveals no such cause.

In the portions of the text where Berganza and Cañizares have alternating sections of dialog, Berganza's words do not have the emotional impact of Cañizares'. It is true that his reactions to Cañizares' physical attentions are what would have been expected from any sane Christian male of the Golden Age when confronted with an old, ugly, magical hag (and in this case, "old" seems to be the most repelling trait, by far). Berganza turns his head in disgust from her kisses and feels his heart pierced with pain when told that his mother was the same as she. At last, he trembles with terror when viewing her nude and annointed body stretched out before him in a trance on the floor. Little does it matter that he is a dog and she is, after all, human, however inferior she may be as a woman rather than a man--or does it matter? Although Berganza says all the "right" things according to the rules of Golden Age Catholic society, his reactions ring hollow in the after-glow of Cañizares self-portrayals of a lonely old woman who

recognizes her limitations, but still tries to retain in old age the sensuality which was officially denied to her even in youth, a woman who has tried to live within the confines of her society, if only for the purpose of self-preservation, and has failed, a woman who consorts with the devil for her own "deleite," but who, nevertheless, trusts in God to know her future and that, for her, is enough:

Hospitalera soy; buenas muestras doy de mi proceder; buenos ratos me dan mis unturas; no soy tan vieja que no pueda vivir un año, puesto que tengo setenta y cinco; y ya que no puedo ayunar, por la edad; ni rezar, por los vaguidos; ni andar romerías, por la flaqueza de mis piernas; ni dar limosna, porque soy pobre; ni pensar en bien, porque soy amiga de murmurar, y para haberlo de hacer es forzoso pensarlo primero, así que siempre mis pensamientos han de ser malos; con todo esto sé que Dios es bueno y misericordioso y que El sabe lo que ha de ser de mí, y basta. Y quédese aquí esta plática, que verdaderamente me entristece (NE II 343).

How fitting that she should end her life story with an admission of her sadness at its telling, the final evidence of her dissatisfaction with pleasures that are less than real but better than none, as she tells Berganza after inviting him to watch her apply her unguent:

mientras se ríe no se llora; quiero decir que aunque los gustos que nos da el demonio son aparentes y falsos, todavía nos parecen gustos, y el deleite mucho mayor es imaginado que gozado, aunque en los verdaderos gustos debe de ser al contrario (NE II 343).

Cañizares is the only real witch to appear and speak for herself in the Novelas ejemplares. Further, witches are notably absent from the Quijote, magic being performed, fittingly, by Don Quijote's imaginary foil, the sorcerer,

Frestón, who is used to explain the unexplainable. But Frestón, like Dulcinea, belongs only to Don Quijote. Moreover, being removed one step further from the reality of the novel itself, unlike Dulcinea, Frestón has no model outside Don Quijote's readings. While it cannot be denied that the witch figures in the Novelas ejemplares function at times in much the same way as Don Quijote's Frestón, that is, as an explanation of an otherwise unexplainable event or aspect of the plot whose loss might have prevented the continuation or even existence of the story itself, it cannot be said that the manner in which they are treated, nor the fount of their inspiration is the same. Frestón was inspired by fiction. Cañizares, while reminding the reader of *Celestina*, goes beyond. Still more striking, she adds a humanity and pathos to the typical definition of a witch that seems traceable only to everyday life itself.

The witch figure reappears in the Persiles. However, these later witches are not of the same type as the old, ugly witch of El coloquio de los perros. They are instead beautiful, seductive witches in search of a mate. They are described as performing magical feats of witchcraft rather than as participating in the distasteful ceremonies of the witches' covens. As with Cañizares, they are doomed by their improvident and improper desire. The first, an Italian witch, saves a man from prison after extracting his promise to marry her. In an interesting twist on the broom ride, Cervantes has her carry him away on a magic carpet

(reflecting perhaps the influence of his captivity in Argel). After appearing to have turned herself into a wolf (or so reported by her killer), the freed man stabs her to death. Zenotia, the Spanish witch, comes to a similar end after trying to entice the naïve Christian-barbarian, Antonio, into allowing her to become his slave (and, of course, lover). Although she finally bewitches Antonio and he nearly dies from her spells, thus revealing her "true" nature, as did the Italian witch when she appeared as a wolf, it is hard to feel sympathy for the two male characters who repaid kindnesses with such cruelty. If there is any validity to the theory that as history progressed, the dominant view of imperfect woman transformed from the witch into the hysteric, Cervantes' characters would present perfect examples of that transformation. One thing is certain, if the assumed composition of the Persiles as Cervantes' last work is correct, his witches became more sympathetic characters as their author advanced in age.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Agustín G. de Amezúa y Mayo, Cervantes: creador de la novela corta española (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1956) 237.

<sup>2</sup> Helia M. Corral, "La mujer en las Novelas ejemplares de Cervantes Saavedra," Cervantes: su obra y su mundo, ed. Manuel Criado del Val (Madrid: EDI-6, 1981) 403.

<sup>3</sup> It seems that Corral also missed something in her

analysis of the novels when she arrived at a figure of twelve by adding La tía fingida (which has not been proven to be Cervantes'), and carefully dividing El coloquio de los perros from El casamiento engañoso, but omitting the heroine of El celoso extremeño entirely--an unfortunate omission of a major character from the nobility who appears in one of the "realistic" tales and who is not the picture of perfection (398). To maintain that Cervantes' non-noble women are "corrientes . . . poco inteligentes, poco escrupulosas, feas, y su honra les tiene sin cuidado" (403), both ignores the importance of supporting roles and perpetuates the idea that Cervantes unquestioningly bought into his society's prescription for female perfection.

<sup>4</sup> Luis A. Murillo, "The Novelas ejemplares: An Outline," Cervantes 8:2 (1988): 233.

<sup>5</sup> John T. Cull, "Cervantes y el engaño de las apariencias," Anales Cervantinos 19 (1981): 89.

<sup>6</sup> Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993) 233.

<sup>7</sup> Ruth El Saffar, Novel to Romance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974) 147.

<sup>8</sup> Marianne Hester, "The Dynamics of Male Domination Using the Witch Craze in 16th- and 17th-Century England as a Case Study," Women's Studies International Forum: 13.1-2 (1990): 11.

<sup>9</sup> Javier Herrero, "Did Cervantes Feel Calisto's Toothache?" Cervantes: Special Issue, Winter (1988): 127-133.

<sup>10</sup> The evidence of women using their bodies and clothing to speak when words were denied to them as a means of communication is present throughout the Golden Age, both in literature and in daily life (even as in modern times). After Cervantes, María de Zayas had her character, Lisis, use her fevers to solicit attention in her Novelas amorosas y ejemplares collection. Also, note Estefanía's use of her veil, clothing, and make-up in El casamiento engañoso, as discussed in this chapter.



11 In this passage, rather than any validation of Ricardo's earlier claims of rights of ownership, the "la que" that was given to Leonisa by Ricardo would seem to refer to her life (and her virginity), both protected by Ricardo's sword during their adventure.

12 Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce, "La gitánilla," Cervantes 1.1-2 (1982) 11.

13 See McKendrick, Chapter 3 (73-106), especially 77.

14 Luis Murillo, "The Novelas ejemplares: An Outline," Cervantes 8.2 (1988): 236.

15 Phyllis Chesler also notes, beginning in the sixteenth century, the progressive increase in identifying women with madness and mental disorders in her book Women and Madness, (New York: Avon, 1972) 32. See also, Hester 12.

16 Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason (1961), tr. Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1965).

17 Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979) 73.

18 L. J. Woodward, "La gitánilla," Cervantes: su obra y su mundo, ed., Manuel Criado del Val (Madrid: EDI-6, 1983) 445-451.

19 The importance of noting the "ceceo" is mentioned by both Alban K. Forcione in his Cervantes, Aristotle and the Persiles (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970) 370 and by Lesley Lipson in her article "Mendacious Discourse in La gitánilla" from Cervantes 9.1 (1989): 35-53.

20 For a landmark religious interpretation, see Joaquín Casaldueiro, Sentido y forma de las novelas ejemplares (Buenos Aires: Ed. Coni, 1943) 121-134; also, for a brief overview of critical variations, see Marcia L. Welles, "Violence Disguised: Representation of Rape in Cervantes' La fuerza de la sangre," Journal of Hispanic Philology 13 (1989): 240-252.

- 21 Paul Descouzis, "Reflejos del Concilio de Trento en el Quijote" Hispania 47 (1964): 479-484.
- 22 Anthony J. Cascardi, "Cervantes's Exemplary Subjects," Cervantes's Exemplary Novels and the Adventure of Writing, Hispanic Issues 6, eds. Michael Nerlich and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minneapolis: Prisma Institute, 1989) 66.
- 23 Pamela Lakes Wood, "The Victim in a Forcible Rape Case: A Feminist View," Rape Victimology, ed. LeRoy G. Schultz (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1975) 194-217.
- 24 Alice Vachss, Sex Crimes (New York: Random House, 1993).
- 25 William B. Sanders, Rape and Woman's Identity, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980) 22.
- 26 R.P. Calcraft, "Structure, Symbol and Meaning in Cervantes's La fuerza de la sangre," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies 58 (1981): 198. Calcraft states in his analysis that "Leocadia's abduction and rape by Rodolfo causes her to lose consciousness [underline mine]," whereas, based on the evidence of the text, it is obvious that although the fright of the kidnapping caused her to lose control, it is that loss that contributed to the success of the rape.
- 27 Thomas Pabon, "Secular Resurrection through Marriage in Cervantes' La señora Cornelia, Las dos doncellas and La fuerza de la sangre," Anales Cervantinos 16 (1977) 1-16.
- 28 Dina De Rentiis "Cervantes's La fuerza de la sangre and the Force of Negation," Nerlich 166.
- 29 Otilia López Fuentes Fanego, "Algunas reflexiones acerca de la mujer en Montaigne y Cervantes," Anales Cervantinos 19 (1981) 105-117.
- 30 Ruth El Saffar, Beyond Fiction (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1984) 11.
- 31 Linda Britt, "Teodosia's Dark Shadow? A Study of

Women's Roles in Cervantes' Las dos doncellas," Cervantes 8.1 (1988): 44.

32 José Luis Martín, "Propiedad, sexo y religión," Historia 16 2.19 (1977): 53-54 (regarding the catechism of Pedro de Cuéllar).

33 Américo Castro, Hacia Cervantes 3rd ed., revised (Madrid: Taurus, 1967) 450.

34 As quoted by Castro, Hacia Cervantes, 421.

35 Cascardi, Nerlich 59.

36 Mary Elizabeth Perry, Crime and Society in Early Modern Seville (Hanover: Univ. Press of New England, 1980) 226.

37 Escribanías de Cabildo, Siglo XVII, Sección III, Tomo 11, Número 62 (1572).

38 Alban K. Forcione, Cervantes and the Mystery of Lawlessness: A Study of El casamiento engañoso y El coloquio de los perros (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984).

39 Ruth El Saffar, Cervantes: El casamiento engañoso and El coloquio de los perros (London: Grant and Cutler, 1976) 17.

40 Mary Gossy, The Untold Story: Women and Theory in Golden Age Texts (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1989) 63.

41 Michael Nerlich, "On the Philosophical Dimension of El casamiento engañoso and El coloquio de los perros," Cervantes's Exemplary Novels and the Adventure of Writing, eds. Michael Nerlich and Nicholas Spadaccini (Minneapolis: Prisma Institute, 1989) 256.

42 Annette Kolodny, "A Map for Rereading; or, Gender and the Interpretation of Literary Texts," The (M)other Tongue, eds. Shirley Nelson Garner, Claire Kahane, and

Madelon Sprengnether (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985) rereads Susan Keating Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" (1917) Images of Women in Literature, ed. Mary Anne Ferguson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973).

43 Patrocínio P. Schweickart, "Reading Ourselves: Toward a Feminist Theory of Reading," Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts, eds. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocínio P. Schweickart (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986) 31-62, see especially 50-51.

44 Xavière Gauthier, "Why Witches?" New French Feminisms, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtiviron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981) 197-203.

45 Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: A History of Women Healers (New York: The Feminist Press, 1973) 8.

46 Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, The Malleus Maleficarum, trans. Rev. Montague Summers (New York: Dover Publications, 1971).

47 See Julio Caro Baroja's The World of the Witches, trans. O.N.V. Glendinning (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), especially regarding the thesis that some held that "in certain cases the `Sabbath' was a reality even though, in others, only an illusion of reality conjured up by the Devil" (113). Cervantes suggests this possibility in the Persiles when describing the flight of the Italian witch.

CHAPTER 5  
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The sociologist Andrew J. Weigert has said that, "since we cannot get outside society, we learn to escape by going inside our heads," but Cervantes did more than just escape to an interior reality.<sup>1</sup> He was able to use the experiences of his own marginal social standing and his confinement and objectification as a Christian captive in Argel to create a literature that spoke for the repressed members of his society, including Golden Age women. Angelic heroines, outspoken proto-feminist beauties, victims of uncontrolled human desire, desperate women of loose morals, and witches: these are the major characters of the Novelas ejemplares, Cervantes' women. Their salient traits are definitively not those that would have been envisioned by a misogynist. On the positive side, the characters are kind, spiritually beautiful, loyal, discreet, and perhaps most important, well-educated. The negative characters are more worthy of pity than disgust, and present to the reader evidence of a flawed society rather than of imperfections in the female spirit. Not imitations of Golden Age ideal or mythological types, Cervantes' women emerge instead as original combinations of literary styles, religious ideals, and real-

life models. While they do not belie the existence of a sexual appetite in women, neither do they have the unabashed openness of lusty Placerdemivida and her sisters. They do present evidence of an author who favored marriage as a holy and desirable union, as an equal partnership, to be based on the love and free choice of both spouses. Unlike classical models, Cervantes' women in general are not mentally inferior; and although their smaller stature and generally weaker physical state is recognized, they also can be seen fighting, in the style of Catalina de Erauso, in battles and skirmishes.

But what of the minor figures, the often nameless everyday women that serve as "fillers" in the texts? The brief glimpses of those women are perhaps the clearest evidence of an author who was able to go beyond what he had been taught to believe, in order to present to the reader the realities of what he had lived. Tucked in between the perfect, idealized, angelic heroines, the fantastic witches, the prostitutes, the noble beauties, and the vocal feminists, Cervantes created a supporting cast of the women in between. Some are noble, some are of the common classes, some are rich, some poor--they are good, evil, beautiful, and ugly. In short, the novellas provide brief glimpses of women as women, in all shades of grey. They are the mothers, the dueñas, the innkeepers' wives, the women scorned, the self-serving rich. Their reputations are spotless or

spotted, as case may be; and their role is to serve the plot--to complicate or simplify or merely support.

Cervantes' secondary female characters, the everyday women, while much less spectacular than the beautiful heroines, prostitutes, and witches, are hardly less memorable. By far the most interesting and clearly defined of these secondary figures are the women closest to the heroines--women such as Doña Estefanía of La fuerza de la sangre, the dueña Marialonso of El celoso extremeño, and the innkeeper's wife in La ilustre fregona.

There is no doubt that Costanza of La ilustre fregona would have seemed less virtuous without the supporting figure of her adoptive mother. Cervantes makes this clear to any reader who may have missed her importance to Costanza's character when, following the unraveling of the mystery of Costanza's parentage, all the characters are moving toward the magistrate's house to cement the marriage plans and the innkeeper's wife is included in the noble group as the only mother Costanza has known. It is also important to note that, in keeping with Cervantes' constant, yet subtle, insistence on the value of education for women, care has been taken to stress that the innkeeper's wife is well able to read and decipher poetry--in fact, better able than her husband, who trusts not only her reading, but her judgment and discretion (at least in matters of male-female relations) more than his own. This stressing of the value of the educated marriage partner appears to be more contrived

than coincidental. The plot would not have lost its fluidity had Costanza's "mother" been removed entirely; yet her inclusion has the effect of stressing not only the value of partnership in marriage, but the importance and advantage to all concerned of a mother-figure who is well-prepared to guide and protect her charges. It would seem that Cervantes' Humanist education was far from silenced by the changing attitudes toward adherents of that philosophy.

The gypsy grandmother of La gitanilla, while she might have been portrayed as a totally negative character, redeems herself for her earlier kidnapping of the infant who becomes her "Preciosa" by risking her life when she reveals Preciosa's identity in an attempt to save Andrés' life. While this might have been written in as a calculated risk for the obviously greedy woman to somehow further her own fortunes, it does not appear to be that at all. Her determination to cause "que estos llantos se conviertan en risa, aunque a mí me cueste la vida" (NE I 126) is unquestionably a selfless act. The fact that she then remains with Preciosa and suffers no penalty or retribution supports the notion that her good intentions are accepted and past sins are forgiven.

The relationship established between the raped Leocadia and the mother of her rapist prompted Marcia Welles to label La fuerza de la sangre "a woman's story" (241). It might also be cited as the novel wherein Cervantes demonstrated the importance on a practical plane of what Gerda Lerner



would later describe as "a sisterhood of women," which she considers a necessary to the development of a feminist consciousness.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the "sangre" of family lineage or blood ties is specifically mentioned in the last lines of the novel when explaining the grandfather's decision to carry the wounded child into his own home-- "permitido todo por el cielo y por `la fuerza de la sangre,' que vio derramada en el suelo el valeroso, ilustre y cristiano abuelo de Luisico" (NE II 95). And it is also true that that decision was the necessary catalyst to initiate the process of recognition. However, from the point that the wounded child, Luisico, is carried into his grandparents' house, the women of this novel control the action. Although the sight of his grandson's blood is what prompted the Rodolfo's father to take the child to his own house, subsequent developments would lend credence to the theory that, in this novel, there is more to a blood tie than family lineage.

Alice Walker stated in an interview, "The birth process is the mainstay connection between all women. Motherhood is the hidden miracle."<sup>3</sup> Everything depends upon the relationship between Doña Estefanía and Leocadia and upon Doña Estefanía's direct intervention. It is to Doña Estefanía that Leocadia choses to confess the circumstances of Luis' birth and it is into her arms that she faints (not once, but twice). It is Doña Estefanía who receives her "como mujer y noble, en quien la compasión y misericordia

suele ser tan natural como la crueldad en el hombre" (NE II 88), and who then awakens her with her tears. Finally, it is she who unwaveringly tells her husband "hagáis cuenta que esta desmayada es hija vuestra y este niño vuestro nieto" (NE II 89).

Of course, not all of the secondary characters are as positive, even as positive as Preciosa's gypsy grandmother. The jealous Juana Carducho, for example, very nearly caused Andres' death in La gitanilla; and Leonora's dueña, Marialonsa, in El celoso extremeño was the deciding factor in her mistress' downfall. Cervantes' everyday women, as in real life, span the range of life's possibilities.

As noted by Weigert:

Regardless of the framework each person brings to the world, life for everyone is realized in the present, the here and now, the everyday . . . The structure of everyday life is stretched between the two poles of self and society, which in turn are made up of the two realities of "facts" and "meanings." (292)

Written in between the lines of fictitious characters, Cervantes left us a little bit of his present, the there and then of Golden Age Spain, including an image of everyday women stretched between his personal experiences and interpretations and the historical reality of Spanish society. We can never hope to disentangle the his personal views from the reality of history, but one thing is certain, without the presence of the flesh-and-blood women who influenced and shaped his everyday life, those fictitious

everyday women, the fillers in his texts, could not have been created.

Américo Castro has written that "La ejemplaridad de la obra no es un concepto aislable del tiempo, lugar y situación del escritor que ejemplariza," and further that "Se ha prestado hasta ahora mínima atención a las circunstancias sociales e íntimas de Cervantes . . . la vida de nuestro gran novelista osciló entre el ataque mordaz a la sociedad que lo repelía y el afán de congraciarse con ella."<sup>4</sup> Since I agreed with this sentiment, I felt that it would be a valuable critical contribution to consider a broad overview of the circumstances surrounding the literary creation of the Novelas ejemplares and their creator, in an attempt to determine if, in fact, Cervantes did oscillate between supporting and attacking his society, and if his creation of women characters demonstrated evidence of that oscillation. The recent renewed interest in history as it relates to the study of literature, termed by Edna Aizenberg "the rediscovery of history--a recent literary-critical event . . . ,"<sup>5</sup> has confirmed the timeliness of my study. Although I chose to omit most details of Cervantes' family biography, the evidence, even without those details, does confirm Castro's claim and my assumption that Cervantes' women characters, far from being the work of a misogynist, would prove to be, for the most part, supportive and at times even proto-feminist in their portrayal of the injustices endured by Golden Age women.

Although the uncertain dates of composition of the various individual Novelas ejemplares would make any theories about patterns of evolution in the female characters little more than speculation, the probability that the Persiles was Cervantes' last work makes a comparison of the characters from the Novelas and the Persiles somewhat more reliable. Although that comparison goes beyond the scope of this essay, some interesting points have emerged regarding the differences within character types between the two works. Witches, for example, become more sympathetic characters in the later work, while moving toward the later figure of the female hysteric, as discussed in Chapter 4. The Persiles' Isabela Castrucha might be interpreted as a proto-feminist type due to her determination to take charge of her own destiny and to set the terms of her own future, but rather than being a mistress of language, rhetoric, poetry, and song, she "speaks" with her body, feigning madness, thus creating the only voice that will be heard. Auristela surely is an angelic heroine, but the perfection of that type is now tainted by fickleness and petty jealousies. The desperate Estefanía of El casamiento engañoso is joined by the wayward Luisa. However, reader sympathies are clearly directed towards the men who become involved with her. She is depicted as unredeemingly evil, while the men around her are portrayed as victims of her feminine vices. Finally, in a glance at minor roles, whereas the innkeeper's wise wife in

La ilustre fregona simply advises her husband to keep a closer eye on Costanza: "Estemos a la mira y avisemos a la muchacha . . ." (NE II 177), the innkeeper's wife in the Persiles insists that it is best to not allow young girls to "ver la calle ni aun por un agujero" (Persiles 200). Whether these changes, some slight, some more extreme, indicate that there is a move in Cervantes' later years toward a view of woman as a weaker, inherently wicked and sinful being, remains to be investigated in future studies. However, in the same way that Cervantes' captivity in Argel is considered a strong influence in his works, if that supposed trajectory toward a more negative view of woman as Cervantes aged is ever traced, it will be surprising if his late-life experiences with his own wayward daughter are not cited as support for the changed perceptions in his last work. In contrast to the opinions of critics from the earlier part of this century who believed, as did Sadie Trachman, that "Cervantes' women relatives had a primarily negative influence on him" (3), I do not believe that a negative influence can be detected until the Persiles. Further, while there may be a tendency towards a more negative or even misogynist view of woman when the body of Cervantes' works is considered, that pattern certainly is not clear in his Novelas ejemplares.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Andrew J. Weigert, Sociology of Everyday Life (New York: Longman, 1981) 292.

<sup>2</sup> Gerda Lerner, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 232-33.

<sup>3</sup> Marian Christy, "Out of Oppression into Feelings of Joy," Gainesville Sun 28 July 1992, D1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Américo Castro, Hacia Cervantes, 3rd ed., revised (Madrid: Taurus, 1967) 453 and 448.

<sup>5</sup> Edna Aizenberg, "Historical Subversion and Violence of Representation in García Márquez and *Ouologuem*," Publications of the Modern Language Association 107.5 (1992), 1235.

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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Adolfo Prieto, Chairman  
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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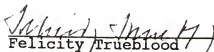
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Geraldine Nichols  
Professor of Romance Languages and  
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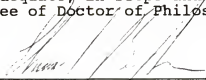
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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